# POLYHEDRON®

VOLUME 19
NUMBER 03
MONTH 06/99

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

# announcements

## LIVING CITY™ CAMPAIGN STAFF CHANGE

When Dan Donnelly had his heart attack in January, Brian Burr took over the direction of the LIVING CITY™ campaign. He helped guide the staff in revisiting the way things are done, with the result that we have appointed a board of Campaign Directors to run the campaign. The board elects a Chairperson from within its ranks each year to serve as a spokesperson for the board. The chair will be elected every year at the WINTER FANTASY™ show. Greg Sherwood has been chosen as Chairman for the 1999 term. Brian has retired to continue playing his characters, but will be helping with the campaign in many ways. Thanks to both Dan and Brian for all that they did on behalf of the membership and the campaign.

Each director will manage an aspect of the campaign, and the board will review and approve things as a group when needed. If you have a specific concern, please address it to the Campaign Director who covers that aspect of the campaign. If you are not sure who to address something to, try Greg or HQ and we'll get you in touch with the right person.

Two reasons motivate this direction in leadership. First, there is a lot of work involved in running the campaign, and one person cannot do it all. Second, we want to provide some stability at the top of the campaign, so that when someone leaves the campaign board the work will continue.

**Lord Mayor**
TSR, Inc.

**Guild Master**
Ryan Dancey

**Sheriff**
Robert Wiese

**Lamplighters Guild**
Game Support (800) 324-6496

**City Watch**
Donna Woodcock
Mark Painter

**Dung Sweeper**
Sean Glenn

### THE CAMPAIGN BOARD CONSISTS OF:

**Greg Sherwood**, Chair, Meta-game Organizations
LCOrgs@rpga.net
Meta-game Organizations are those activities outside tournament play which player characters can join or belong to. These include (but are not limited to) guilds, knighthoods, the Watch, and the Clerical Circle.

**Brooks Banks**, Information and Rulings
LCInfo@rpga.net
Information and Rules are those aspects which do not involve characters directly. These include (but are not limited to) propagation of information, website, Trumpeter, and game question rulings.

**Carl Buehler**, Meta-game Activities
LCActivites@rpga.net
Meta-game Activities are those activities outside tournament play which do not involve PC membership. These include (but are not limited to) interactives, magic trading, land office, semi-retirements, animals, and more.

**Joe Cirillo**, Plots
LCPlots@rpga.net
Plots are those things which drive stories. The Plots Director manages and approves all plots, with the help of the staff under him. Plots now include both High Level campaign stories.

**Lee McClurkin**, Expansions and Development
LCExpansions@rpga.net
Expansions and Development involves bringing new things into the campaign which are more complex than a single organization or activity. Currently these include Procampur and the Highbank elves.

The chair functions as the spokesperson of the board and directs board meetings. Otherwise the board functions as a group of equals in running the campaign.

HQ's role is to sit on and advise the board, insert some creativity occasionally, see that the needs of RPGA and TSR are met in the campaign, and serve as final authority when necessary. However, HQ is strongly supportive of the board and the campaign staff, and will support their decisions most of the time. If you have an issue, please start with the campaign staff person who oversees that aspect of the campaign. Also, HQ will be making decisions in concert with the campaign board, so coming straight to Robert to get a ruling won't help anyone bypass rulings of campaign staff members.

The current campaign staff is presented below. Please note that just because someone is in charge of something does not mean that their PCs are involved, or that any NPCs they may be playing are involved. This is especially true of the secret organizations. The person listed is running the organization out-of-character only.

LIVING CITY campaign officials volunteer their time so that players, judges, and authors can continue to enjoy the Campaign. With 4,000 or more players, judges, and authors involved it's easy to overwhelm a campaign official with requests for their time, especially at conventions. Please be considerate of campaign officials at conventions. If you have a request or concern, it is generally best to email them at their official email address. If you don't have access to email then write to RPGA HQ and your mail will be forwarded to the appropriate person. Of course, if the campaign official is officially participating in a LIVING CITY-related meeting, they're fair game for the duration of the meeting. When the meeting is over, please afford campaign officials the courtesy of going about their business unhindered. If you just want to be friendly and talk of things not related to LIVING CITY, then you can approach any of these people at most reasonable times. Use your judgment, and think about whether you'd like to be bombarded with LIVING CITY questions all the time at conventions. Thank you.

### META-CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONS STAFF

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Knightly Orders: | Tim Marling | marling@psych.stanford.edu |
| Bards Guild: | Tim Breen | breenrt@lightside.com |
| Wizards Guild: | Paul Pederson | Mightywyrm@AOL.com |
| City Watch: | Don Wetherbee | surekhac@aol.com |
| Merchants Guild: | Paul Dorothy | |
| Clerical Circle: | Keith Hoffman | KWH53@AOL.com |
| Military: | Roger Rhodes | rdrhodes@cisco.com |
| Silent Network: | Gene Luster | sirrizzen@AOL.com |
| Harpers: | Mystery guest | LCharper@rpga.net |
| Company of the Raven: | Rod Ehrman | LCcotr@rpga.net |

### META-CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES STAFF

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Interactives: | Joe Pavlico | |
| Land Office: | George Aber | LCLandOfc@aol.com |
| Magic Trading | Adam Willequer | LCMagicShop@rpga.net |
| Semi-retirements | TBD | LCRetirement@rpga.net |
| Special Missions | Gail Reese | LCSpecMis@rpga.net |
| Certs-by-Mail | Troy Daniels | LCCertsByMail@rpga.net |

### INFORMATION STAFF

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Trumpeter: | Tim Hernandez | LCTrumpeter@rpga.net |
| Rulings: | Cisco Lopez-Fresquet | Cfresquet@aol.com |
| Cheating: | Alex Lombardi and I | LCSecurity@rpga.net |
| Website: | Troy Daniels | Troy@rpga.net |
| | Jae Walker | Jae@rpga.net |

### PLOTS STAFF

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Civic Plots: | Gail Reese | LCNonGovPlots@rpga.net |
| Government: | Rick Brill | RBrill@d.umn.edu |
| Outlying Areas: | Larry Douglas | dougla21@pilot.msu.edu |
| Underdark | Heather Van Buren | vistani@hotmail.com |
| Temples | Joe Cirillo | lassars@aol.com |
| Planar: | Erich Schmidt | siropal@bellsouth.net |

### EXPANSIONS STAFF

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Procampur: | Jay Fisher | jlorien@concentric.net |

*Member Steve Jay sent me this article, the topic of which was exactly what I wanted to write for Notes from HQ this issue. So, here it is.*

## WHO SAYS YOU SHOULD PLAY OTHER GAME SYSTEMS? WELL, YOU DO.

By Stephen H. Jay

Most network gamers have one RPGA game system they prefer over all others. If you've been to even one convention or eavesdropped on even one internet chat room dedicated to the RPGA, you've probably heard proponents of different games vigorously argue the virtues of their favorite system. Rather than offer my own opinion, I decided to look at some hard facts.

### THE SOURCE.

RPGA Headquarters provide me with two ways to look at the scenario score database. The first lists the overall averages of all scenarios active in 1997 and 1998. It is, in short, a snapshot of all RPGA scenarios and the ratings given to them by their players and judges. The second looks at scenario scores over this time period broken down by convention.

### THE FIRST METHOD

For the fist analysis I used the overall scenario averages database. I eliminated all the systems with fewer than five listed scenarios to insure a reasonably large data population. This narrowed the game systems to the AD&D® game (classic), ALTERNITY® Science-fiction Roleplaying Game, Call Of Cthulhu, LIVING CITY™, LIVING DEATH™, LIVING JUNGLE™, Paranoia, Shadowrun, Star Wars, and Virtual Seattle (SHADOWRUN LIVING™ campaign).

I then defined five measures of player satisfaction: Simple Average, 20 Highest Scoring Scenarios, 20 Lowest Scoring Scenarios, Percentage Of Scenarios Scoring Above 84, and Percentage Of Scenarios Scoring Below 63.

**SIMPLE AVERAGE.** An average rating doesn't mean much if you don't know what it's supposed to measure. If a table with 6 players and a judge were to score a scenario all "3's" on a scale from 1 to 5, the scenario score would be "63". All "4's" would be an "84".

The average score of all the scenarios we are measuring is 74.24. The rankings were: ALTERNITY - 82.83; Paranoia - 78.97; LIVING JUNGLE - 78.08; Call Of Cthulhu - 77.13; AD&D - 75.11; Virtual Seattle - 74.80; LIVING DEATH - 72.48; LIVING CITY - 72.31; Star Wars - 71.64; Shadowrun - 69.18.

**TWENTY HIGHEST SCORING SCENARIOS.** This unit of measure provides an absolute number of high scoring scenarios in relation to the entire database. The game systems ranked as follows: 1) AD&D with ten of the top scenarios; 2) LIVING CITY with six scenarios; 3) LIVING JUNGLE with three scenarios; 4) ALTERNITY with two scenarios. 5) Call Of Cthulhu with two, but scoring lower. 6) LIVING DEATH with one scenario; 7) Paranoia with one, but scoring lower; 8) Virtual Seattle, Star Wars, and Shadowrun with none.

**TWENTY LOWEST SCORING SCENARIOS.** This unit of measure provides an absolute number of low-scoring scenarios in relation to the entire database. 1) Alternity and Virtual Seattle faired best with none of these scenarios; 2) Living Death with one; 3) Paranoia with one; 4) Living Jungle with one; 5)Shadowrun with one; 6) Star Wars with two; 7) Call Of Cthulhu with three; 8) AD&D with five; 9) LIVING CITY with six.

**PERCENTAGE OF SCENARIOS SCORING ABOVE 84.** This measure indicates the unweighted percentage chance of encountering a high-scoring scenario. 1) ALTERNITY - 40%; 2) Call Of Cthulhu - 34.3%; 3) Paranoia - 28.5%; 4) LIVING JUNGLE - 26%; 5) Star Wars - 20%; 6) AD&D - 18.7%; 7) Virtual Seattle - 13.3%; 9) LIVING DEATH - 5.8%; 10) LIVING CITY - 5.2%; 11) Shadowrun - 0%.

**PERCENTAGE OF SCENARIOS SCORING BELOW 63.** This measure indicates the unweighted percentage chance of encountering a low scoring scenario. 1) LIVING CITY - 8%; 3) LIVING DEATH - 8.8%; 4) Call Of Cthulhu - 9%; 5) LIVING JUNGLE - 11%; 6) AD&D - 11.5%; 7) Virtual Seattle - 13.3%; 8) Paranoia - 14%; 9) Star Wars - 20%; 10) Shadowrun - 33%; 11) ALTERNITY - 40%.

#### OVERALL RATINGS

Ranking the scenarios within these units of measure provides a method for scoring the game systems themselves. For example, ALTERNITY came in 1st with the highest Simple Average, so it earned 1 point in that measure. After adding them all together, the game systems with the lowest overall score represents the highest level of player and judge satisfaction.

1: ALTERNITY - 18 Points
2: LIVING JUNGLE - 19 Points
3: Paranoia - 20 Points
4: Call Of Cthulhu - 23 Points
6: AD&D - 27 Points
7: LIVING DEATH - 28 Points
8: Virtual Seattle - 31 Points
9: LIVING CITY - 32 Points
10: Star Wars - 38 Points
11: Shadowrun - 45 Points

### THE SECOND METHOD

For the second analysis I used the scenario averages broken down by convention. As before, I eliminated all the systems that had run at fewer than five conventions to insure a reasonably large data population. This narrowed the game systems to AD&D, Alternity, Call Of Cthulhu, Champions, Deadlands, Earthdawn, LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH, LIVING JUNGLE, Paranoia, Shadowrun, Star Wars, Threads Of Legend (Earthdawn LIVING campaign), Vampire RPG, Virtual Seattle, and Werewolf.

### SOME CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps the most striking aspect of these ratings is that LIVING CITY, by far the most popular system, rates near the bottom in both rankings. Other systems that are played far less frequently soundly outscore it.

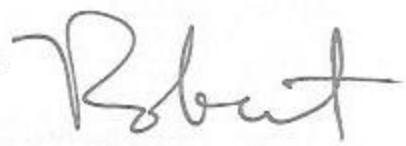
There are a number possible explanations. First, the methods of measurement I have used might not measure the real reason people play LIVING CITY. They do not, for instance, take into account the pleasure a player gets by running the same character over and over again. But if that is the case, why do other LIVING systems rate so high?

The second possible explanation is that LIVING CITY, being the grand-daddy of Living campaigns, has the highest level of expectations from its players. So many scenarios covering so many different possibilities have been explored that LIVING CITY players could be harder to satisfy when they are playing LIVING CITY then when they are playing some other system.

The third possibility is actually related to the second, the idea that "newness" or uniqueness increases interest. For instance, Alternity, TSR's newest RPG, scores fairly high. Champions, and Paranoia, just to name two, aren't new but they are unique. It might also be argued that most of the authors for these other scenarios are of the most passionate and enthusiastic kind, and this shows through in their work.

*Thanks Steve. Though the theme of this issue is* LIVING CITY, *I urge you to try other games. You might find them to be for you like Mexican food is for me. I don't choose it if given a choice, but if I am taken to a Mexican restaurant I can enjoy myself and eat just fine. So, let someone drag you into a Classic game once in a while, or into anything you have not tried before. You probably won't be sorry. And let them drag you to Mexican food too, especially if they are paying.*

Go carefully,



# notes from HQ

*IF IT FITS, IT PRINTS. WITH SPECIAL GUEST STEVEN H. JAY*

**THE SECOND METHOD**
**After processing the data using the same units of measure as before, the results were as follows:**

1: Paranoia .....16 Points
2: Threads Of Legend .....19 Points
3: Champions & Call of Cthulhu...24 Points
4: AD&D .....26 Points
5: LIVING JUNGLE .....27 Points
6: ALTERNITY .....29 Points
7: Earthdawn .....36 Points
8: Virtual Seattle .....37 Point
9: LIVING DEATH .....40 Points
10: Shadowrun .....41 Points
11: Werewolf .....42 Points
12: Vampire .....43 Points
13: LIVING CITY .....44 Points
14: Star Wars.....45 Points
15: Deadlands .....56 Points

## in this issue:

3 NOTES FROM HQ
4 TABLE TALK
6 MEMBER SPOTLIGHT JEFFERY M. WEST
7 INTERNET 101 LIVING CITY WEB SITES
8 ELMINISTER'S EVERWINKING EYE
10 CITY STORIES TEMPLE OF SELÛNE
13 CLUB DECATHALON MONSTER SCORCHED ONE
14 ROCKROOST A LIVING CITY BUSINESS
18 THE HOUSE OF SPICE NO SPICE GIRLS HERE
21 BLIND DICK
22 THE HAPPY HIPPOCAMPUS INN & TAVERN
24 HUNGER IN THE HARBOR
26 SWASH THAT BUCKLE HEROIC COMBAT IN YOUR GAME
30 CONVENTIONS
31 WINTER FANTASY 2000 INFO
32 READER SURVEY FILL THAT SUCKER OUT

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

## CONTEST

This month's cover depicts an interesting thief running from a jewelry shop. Who is this mysterious woman? The contest is to write up this woman as an NPC for the LIVING CITY campaign. Originality and creativity are key to winning, but don't go over the top with her. She should fit the setting and you should explain why she finds herself in the situation portrayed on the cover. We'll run the best version in a later issue of the magazine, and the winner will receive a nice prize from the RPGA prize closet. Deadline for submission is July 31st. Submissions may be made by mail or email, but signed Standard Disclosure Forms are required with the submission or sent separately by mail. All submissions must include an electronic copy, so that we can publish it if we choose it as the winner. Maximum length for background is 600 words, so she fits on one page. Needless to say, stats for AD&D are required.

▲ Hannibal King drew her, you figure out who she is. Freckles and all.

# table talk

THE DECATHALON SCORES AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

**NOTE**

The Top 50 List is missing this issue because we find it suspect and want to make sure it is working properly before running the rankings again.

## NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS

The RPGA site is now at www.rpga.com. The old addresses still work, www.tsr.com/rpga and www.tsrinc.com/rpga, but www.rpga.com is so much easier.

## CLUB DECATHLON NEWS

The end of March saw two Decathlon Creative events close, and so we present the results and current standings below. We are awaiting packets from several conventions to determine tournament play event results. We hope to have all those ready to post very soon. If we are waiting for your packets, send them in. By the time you read this we will have posted the One Round Tournament results, and maybe the Best Website results.

### AD&D MONSTER CREATION EVENT

This event was very interesting in that two clubs submitted the same monster. Nine clubs submitted monsters, and we had a tie for first. The tie was between the two clubs that submitted the same monster, the Rusalka. Fellowship of the Black Spot took second with the Scorched One. All top winners were undead, by the way.

ARC Fellowship .....4 points
Black Spot .....2 points
DragonWing RPS.....1 point
WARLords.....1 point
Waterdeep Boys Club .....1 point
OSQUIPS.....4 points
Death Warmed Over .....1 point
Black Hand .....1 point
Clarksville GM Guild .....1 point

### BEST CLUB NEWSLETTER FOR THE FIRST QUARTER:

This one was even harder to judge. Your clubs do some great newsletters. But, in the end, we had to choose. The *Arcanum*, ARC Fellowship's newsletter, barely squeaked into the winning position. Close behind were the *Evening Post* (from the PM Players) and *DragonWing Monthly* (from DragonWing RPS), tied at second place.

ARC Fellowship .....4 points
DragonWing RPS .....2 points
GAM .....1 point
WARLords.....1 point
Black Spot.....1 point
PM Players .....2 points
Death Warmed Over .....1 point
Black Hand .....1 point
Clarksville GM Guild .....1 point

### OVERALL STANDINGS SO FAR:

ARC Fellowship.....10 points
PM Players .....6 points
DragonWing RPS .....4 points
WARLords .....3 points
DAWN.....2 points
Clarksville GM Guild .....2 points
GLRPGAC.....1 point
Waterdeep Boys Club .....1 point
DWO .....6 points
OSQUIP .....6 points
Black Hand.....3 points
Black Spot .....3 points
GAM .....2 points
GEAR.....1 point
Mob (The) .....1 point

## DECATHLON EVENTS FOR JUNE THROUGH AUGUST

### BEST NEW DECATHLON EVENT

**Deadline: June 30**

**1st Place: 4 points | 2nd Place: 2 points | Participation: 1 point**

**Results posted by: July 15**

Every year we make up these events, and it's not easy, believe us. Now it's your turn. Propose a Decathlon event of any kind, in the format shown in this article. It can be as wild as you want, but it must be something a club can do, preferably something that takes more than one person to accomplish. We'll make the best events part of next year's competition.

### MULTI-ROUND TOURNAMENT

**Deadline: July 31**

**1st Place: 6 points | 2nd Place: 4 points | Participation: 2 point**

**Results posted by: August 31**

Write a multi-round tournament in any game system we use in the tournament program. The tournament must include six or more well-developed encounters per round and necessary maps. Player characters are required when applicable. It may be designated for a specific convention.

Submit a disk copy of the submission in a format readable by MS Word (we recommend .rtf), a printout of the submission, and the necessary forms. All entries must adhere to the RPGA Standards of Content as published in the Membership Handbook and on the website, and for gosh sakes, run it through a spelling and grammar checker. All stat blocks must be correct. Entries should not exceed 15,000 words per round, not including characters.

### BEST REPORT ON THE GEN CON® GAME FAIR

**Deadline: August 25**

**1st Place: 4 points | 2nd Place: 2 points | Participation: 1 point**

**Results posted by: September 15**

Write a report on the GEN CON Game Fair for us. Include major events, anything interesting to you, and anything someone else would be interested in (funny stories, high

weirdness). Fit all this into 1,000 words or less. Entries will be judged on how well they captured the spirit of the Game Fair, and how well you mix facts with interesting writing to create a review that might attract others to go next year. Don't write a promo piece, think news story. One word of advice: an entry where the author goes on for 1,000 words about how GEN CON sucks probably won't win.

### SPECIAL ADDED DECATHLON EVENTS

**Service: Most Certified Judges as Club Members by the GEN CON Game Fair**

**Event Period: January 1st to August 4th**

**1st Place: 6 points | 2nd Place: 4 points | Participation: 2 point**

**Results posted by: September 15**

The club with the highest percentage of certified judges in its membership by the GEN CON Game Fair will get Decathlon points. To enter this event, just get your judges certified and the information to Jae Walker by the end of the event period. Jae manages the certification program, and should be contacted to arrange the certification seminars and proctoring.

### TOURNAMENT PLAY: MOST TOURNAMENTS OTHER THAN LIVING™ CAMPAIGNS PLAYED BY CLUB MEMBERS

**Event Period: January 1st to November 30th**

**1st Place: 6 points | 2nd Place: 4 points | Participation: 1 point**

**Results posted by: March 2000 with overall results**

All tables of any RPGA tournament other than LIVING campaign events count toward this category, no matter the placement. Judging instances do not apply. The results will be averaged over club size as of December 15th, so the results will be posted in terms of average non-LIVING events per club member. This is a tournament play event, but does not count against the limit of four events (so with this one you could enter five tournament play events).

# table talk

## CONFESSIONS OF A NASCRAG™ NEWBIE BY DOUG MOORE

Every August, like many of the world's crazed gamers, the people of NASCRAG get 'geeked up' and make the trek to begin a four day extravaganza of non-stop gaming, shopping, and ingesting ridiculously overpriced hot dogs. My first experience with NASCRAG came during my third Gen Con Game Fair in 1995, while eating one of the aforementioned overpriced hot dogs, actually. I was minding my own business, consuming what served as my dinner, reading some information from a game I had played earlier in the day when I was rudely interrupted.

"What are you doing?" A random guy said.

"Ummm, I'm eating," I sarcastically responded.

"Do you want to play a great roleplaying game, with action, riddles, and an emphasis on character roleplaying? It's a three round adventure with team advancement. You play the same character each round, and stay with the same team. We have a team that needs one player: You. Will you play with us tonight?"

Chew, chew, swallow. "No."

"Come on. It'll be fun. We're NASCRAG, the National Association of Crazed Gamers. Trust me, if you like to roleplay, you'll like our adventure."

Well, I knew that I wanted to roleplay some more that night and didn't have anything planned, so I let myself be persuaded. After all, I figured that GEN CON only comes once a year, and when else can I be asked to play in a role-playing tournament?

It's the best mistake I've ever made. Not only did I have one my greatest single roleplaying experiences that evening, my team also advanced. Unfortunately, the second round dashed our hopes in a comedy of blunders by our team. After our decisive and amusing bungling, I resolved to keep coming back and continue playing NASCRAG's events.

Events would prove otherwise, however. Early in 1996, I received an email from the NASCRAG Headquarters reminding all the players to plan ahead and reserve time for GEN CON and the annual NASCRAG adventure. It also asked if there were any wanna-be judges out there. So, I decided to try and join the group. Convincing the NASCRAG team that I was sincere was tough, though. I sacrificed considerable amounts of time, donuts, and candy to convince them that I really wanted in. The admission bribe aside though, I had such a great time playing in their event that I wanted to join and do for other gamers what NASCRAG did for me: bring back the joy of convention roleplaying. Three years of Gen Con had demonstrated to me that there was a definite need for creative, relaxed, team-oriented role-playing tournaments. NASCRAG fills this niche nicely.

So nicely in fact, that NASCRAG has expanded its gaming horizons. Our flagship event is and always will be Gen Con, but now we also run small events at ORIGINS™ Game Expo and the WINTER FANTASY™ show. Not only do we love running events all year round, but our regular players have actually demanded our events and attendance at other cons. Despite our best efforts to the contrary, our players continue to bribe us with such tasty treats that we can't resist their demands.

Now, in 1999, NASCRAG is girding up for our 20th consecutive appearance at GEN CON, and a convention full of fun and action. Since our first events at the convention, GEN CON has blossomed into the world's premier gaming event. All over the country, indeed all over the world, gamers prepare themselves for the greatest gaming event of the year; four days of frenetic, ceaseless, sleepless gaming. Like GEN CON, NASCRAG began very humbly. At our first event, four judges ran 80 players. Gaining notoriety and converts each year, NASCRAG now fields a membership of over 50 experienced judges and more than 300 regular players, and is the largest independent gaming group at GEN CON. Last year, one of our best, we had 27 judges run over 350 players through our three round tournament and AIDS charity event.

Like the con itself, we are always looking for ways to improve. With our ready supply of experienced, humorous, and easily bribed judges, NASCRAG is ready for its 20th anniversary. Our event is now RPGA-sanctioned, and so far we've registered over 200 new RPGA members. The 20th anniversary party for NASCRAG is more than ready to go; we have a tournament, our favorite dice, and empty stomachs waiting for those oh-so-tasty bribes. We're only waiting until August for the start of another great GEN CON. Find us in the GEN CON registration book and register, or we'll be forced to interrupt your overpriced hot dog dinner. Trust me, it'll be worth your time. ■

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

## JEFFREY M. WEST - A GAMER DISGUISED AS A MUNDANE

**You have been gaming longer than anyone I know. How did you get started?**

I was always a daydreamer - my teachers would bear me out on this. My first role playing experience was about 1958. I was in a dentist's chair under the influence of Sodium Pentothal. While the dentist was doing battle with my jaw for possession of a shattered tooth, I was dressed in gleaming armor astride a snow-white stallion in combat with a great and terrible dragon. While the dentist was bathed in blood, I basked in the praises of the beautiful maiden whose life I had saved (don't tell my wife, but she was a blonde).

(As for) organized role-playing, I have been gaming since the late 1970's. My son, Sholom, discovered the DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS® game in school. Following my lead, (he) was a mediocre student and a very poor reader. DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS proved to be more than a great game. It also turned my son into an excellent reader, which led to his becoming a fast learner and a very good student.

**What makes a gaming experience memorable for you? Do you have a favorite system?**

The creativity and enthusiasm of the players (including the judge) is what makes a gaming experience memorable for me. When the sounds and the scenery around the table fade and blur, and our band of heroes/victims are truly transported into the adventure, that's when I get the Twilight Zone shiver up my back.

I love the AD&D® game and the LIVING CITY™ campaign. I also enjoy several of the D6-System games created by West End Games like Indiana Jones, Bloodshadows and Men In Black. When Dark Conspiracy was declared a dead system, I turned in despair to Shadowrun - very fortunate for me. The shadows, including Virtual Seattle, are now some of the brightest parts of my gaming day. And Call of Cthulhu calms my nerves and reassures me that things do still go "bump" in the night, and the day, and during the total eclipse.

**You made the final table at the "Best Of The Best" tournament at the GEN CON® 1998 Game Fair.**

I found myself in the company of seven of the best role players I have ever seen (I include the two judges in that description). I was at once terrified and excited to be in the company of such creative talent. Although I came in dead last, I had the time of my life.

**You were recommend by someone who much respected your efforts in Magma Gamers.**

Sholom and I played our first RPGA® tournament at a one-day convention in Fairfax, Virginia on March 11, 1989. For too long we played only a few RPGA games each year. Then, for his college graduation, I took my son to the GEN CON Game Fair in 1993. We have been there every year since.

Magma Gamers was registered as an RPGA Network Club in December of 1997. It was formed from a small group of home-campaign gamers, some of whom have played together since the 70's. At last count we were scheduled to run almost a hundred slots. (We also have) run more than a hundred different RPGA titles at regional conventions in Virginia and Pennsylvania and at the ORIGINS™ Game Expo. (In addition), our (charity) efforts have benefitted a shelter for abused children, the American Cancer Society, the Lung Association and the Food Bank of Virginia. We've raised over $5000.

For a more detailed look who we are and what we do, check out our web site at http://www.magma-gamers.com.

**Are you a mundane disguising yourself as a gamer, or a gamer disguising yourself as a mundane?**

I'm actually very fortunate in that the job that provides me a living wage also benefits others. I am Chief Resource Officer for a small Federal agency that grants Federal funds for human services programs. I negotiate and administer a variety of contracts, manage grants, and facilitate the day-to-day operation of a small agency which funds over thirty million dollars worth of social, economic, self-governance, environmental enhancement, and damage mitigation programs for the benefit of Native Americans.

For me, a job has to do more than just put bread on the table and beer in my glass. It has to bring some sort of benefit to others. If I am an idealist and a dreamer, it's because I don't have the courage not to be.

Beginning this year I will take a week of vacation each year at a Habitat for Humanities project. By the time I can retire, I should have learned enough to help run those projects. That is my fantasy.

So, you tell me. Am I a mundane disguised as a gamer or a gamer disguised as a mundane? ■

# member spotlight

BY STEVE JAY

02 .....YOUR INITIAVE
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY



# internet 101

LIVING CITY™ LIVE ON THE WEB BY ED GIBSON

This issue of POLYHEDRON® is all about the LIVING CITY™ campaign, so we'll take a look at some of the web sites dedicated to the campaign and characters. The first stop is the official TSR LIVING CITY web site http://www.rpga.com. This site has contact information on the campaign coordinators (in flux as this column is written), the official character creation guidelines and Cisco Lopez's rules interpretations for the LIVING CITY campaign. If you are interested in ongoing campaigns other than LIVING CITY, the RPGA's other campaigns can be found here too.

There are two additional web sites of value to all RPGA members. The first is http://www.rpga.net/lc/Default.htm. This is a member-run site which is able to respond more quickly to changes than the official TSR/WOTC web site. The most recent character creation changes were available on this site several weeks before they showed up on the official site. The next member site is http://www.rpga.org, run by Tim Breen. The site provides a gossip column and additional LIVING CITY links, although it is updated infrequently.

The most ambitious LIVING CITY site is the Streets of Ravens Bluff web ring at http://members.tripod.com/~ravensbluff. A web ring is a collection of web sites related to a single topic, such as corvettes, serial killers or Ravens Bluff. You can travel through the sites in a web ring either sequentially or randomly. There were 51 different sites in the web ring at the time I wrote this column, the number is likely to grow by the time you read it.

Several of the web sites offer online trading of LIVING CITY magic certificates. The prospect of trading by mail may be tempting, especially if you can't make it to the largest cons, but you need to be extremely careful about the honesty of the person on the other side of the deal. RPGA headquarters will not replace magic item certificates which you lose if the other person fails to make good on his part of the deal.

Over the past few years, I have traded LIVING CITY magic item certificates by mail. I have also bought and sold hundreds of dollars worth of MAGIC: THE GATHERING® and roleplaying game materials with people over the Internet. A few simple rules reduce your risk of being cheated, but as previously noted, neither the author nor the RPGA accept responsibility for any problems.

The first rule is: Ask for References. If the person has been trading for a while, they should have a list of satisfied customers. Warning: AOL and some other ISPs allow multiple screen names for a single user, so be cautious if all of the references are from a single ISP. In addition, hotmail, rocketmail and dejanews (along with others) provide free email accounts. Ideally, a wide variety of names and ISPs will be included in the list of references.

The second rule is: Check the References. Send an email to a selection of the provided references stating you are preparing to make a trade with person X and ask if they had any problems in their dealings with him. If you don't receive satisfactory responses, look elsewhere for trading partners. The corollary of this rule is to provide accurate feedback when you are asked to comment as a reference.

The third rule is: Obtain Contact Information. Ask the individual for her real name, street address (not a post office box) and phone number. Call the phone number and ask for her. If the phone number is bad, run away from the deal. If the person refuses to give you this information, don't deal.

A useful option is to give the certificates to a trusted third party who holds onto all of the certificates until both parties deliver what they've promised. This works especially well if the third party can handle the exchange at a convention.

As you make trades, you want to keep track of your trading partners for your list of references. Customarily, when items are being sold, the buyer sends the money and the seller mails the items once the money is received. This can be reversed in the event the seller lacks references (it's all negotiable). If you don't feel comfortable with the other person, ask him to send his certificates first. The worst that can happen is he says no and this is unlikely to happen if you have solid references. The bottom line is to look out for yourself.

That's all for this issue. If you have any questions or suggested sites, send them to polyhedron@wizards.com. ■

02 .....YOUR INITIAVE
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

*The Neth Stand? Don't bother trying to force your way in. I've not seen a more inhospitable woodland. Traveling along its edges—something to be done only when staggering under the weight of the best armor and spells—you'll soon lose count of the number of trophies gnawed and split open by hungry forest beasts. Bone trophies, that is: human skulls.*

*Shuldribrand Mroster*
*Mage Royal of Zindalankh*
*In conversation with Volo*
*Year of the Arch*

Our tour of the Border Kingdoms this month looks at an untamed feature that fills the northwestern corner of the region—a dark and deadly forest that has taken its toll of generations of Calishite hunters, and (some say) prevented that glittering land from expanding east to swallow the Border realms.

# elminster's

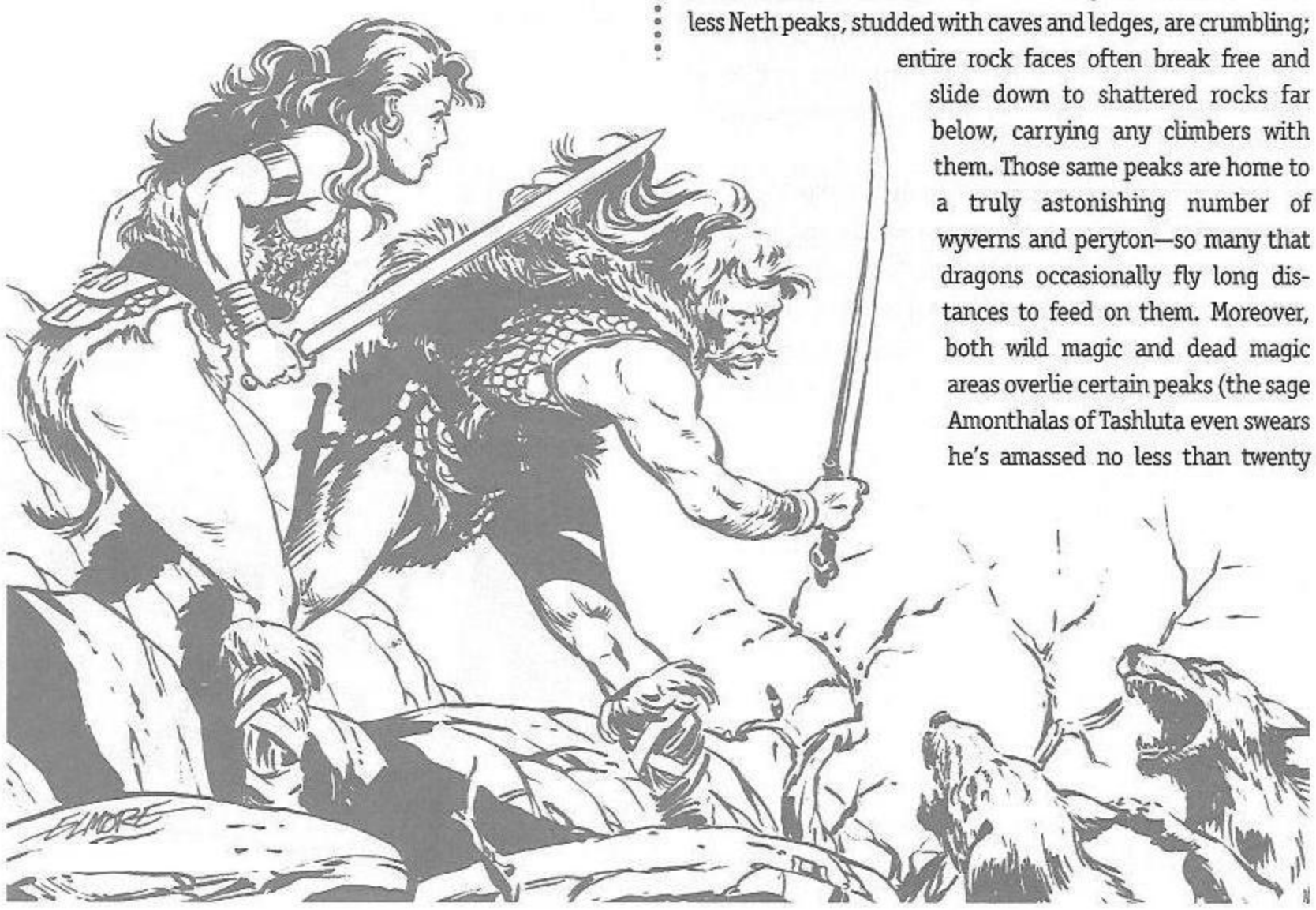
A WAYFARER'S GUIDE TO THE **FORGOTTEN REALMS®**

## THE NETH STAND

This vast forest is named for a widespread Border belief that folk escaping from shattered Netheril came to its forest-shrouded peaks long ago and there 'took a stand.' (It should be noted that most sages believe the 'Stand' refers to a stand of trees, and came into use because the wood consists of tall, dark trees growing close together.) The legend says the Netherese raised fortresses on the rocky heights at the heart of the wood, refusing to run farther from the chaos (and foes gleefully hunting down the oppressors they'd feared and hated for so long).

For years sages all across Faerûn have dismissed this Border legend as, more or less, 'a wild and wishful tale spun out of nothing by a bard.' Wild it may be, but recent sightings (made at great peril, given the scores of peryton and wyverns that infest the range of crumbling peaks running north-south through the heart of the Stand) confirm that the tale wasn't 'spun out of nothing.' There are ruins atop certain of the pinnacles: shattered stone towers that were once slender, beautiful needles reaching skyward.

Who built them, when, and what treasures they may hold are mysteries no intrepid Faerûnian has yet solved. The nameless Neth peaks, studded with caves and ledges, are crumbling; entire rock faces often break free and slide down to shattered rocks far below, carrying any climbers with them. Those same peaks are home to a truly astonishing number of wyverns and peryton—so many that dragons occasionally fly long distances to feed on them. Moreover, both wild magic and dead magic areas overlie certain peaks (the sage Amonthalas of Tashluta even swears he's amassed no less than twenty



02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY



adventurers' accounts that suggest at least one of the dead magic areas drifts up and down the peaks like some sort of invisible tethered cloud!), making adventurer reliance on spells to fly or fight off the dangers of the peaks dangerous indeed.

Numerous Thayvian expeditions into the peaks in recent years suggest that someone in that distant land believes something very valuable (read: magically powerful) lies in the region—and that recovery of this something has so far been so unsuccessful as to claim the lives of many Thayvian searchers.

Woodcutters, adventurers after a place to lair, and hunters seeking stags, boars, and forest cats have found ground-based forays hardly less perilous. The Stand today is an old, dark, thickly-grown forest, the trunks of trees growing so close together that one must almost hack a way along, and its depths so gloomy that phosphorescent fungi (some ambulatory, and perhaps sentient) are often seen. There are no reliable maps of the few short forest trails, and hunters who've tried to use the same routes season after season report that they seem to move, and unexpectedly die away where once they offered clear travel.

Nor is trackless gloom the only thing that makes travelers venturing into the Stand uneasy. Its fringes offer carnivorous plants, thornbush thickets, and several races of small monsters who use extensive burrow networks to surround travelers, strike at them from all sides, and vanish again before the intruders can strike back. If one does win through to the depths, one finds a region of spiders galore—all sorts of spiders, in unnatural profusion—and beyond them, a strange and seemingly inexhaustible supply of monsters.

Amonthalas of Tashluta believes the Stand may be the natural or adopted home of a society or herd of the weird monster-producing creatures known as 'deepspawn,' but other sages scoff at this notion. A few suggest that mad mages or hermit-priests of Malar dwelling in the heart of the Stand may be breeding, constructing, or magically multiplying the myriad array of monsters—but this idea has met with as much derision as "the deepspawn idiocy."

Other sages suggest that a hobgoblin or ogre clan exists in the Stand, whose unusually inspired leaders are responsible for breeding or procuring the monsters to serve as guardians to keep civilized Borderers out. Those who promote this belief usually also add that this so-far-unseen clan must be biding its time for the right moment to burst forth and overrun the Border realms, or the cities around the Lake of Steam, or eastern Calimshan, or all three.

A few sages have posited that renegade Thayvian wizards, or mages exiled from Halruaa, or sorcerers hailing from an unknown elsewhere, dwell in the hidden depths of the Stand, and are behind the profusion of monsters—or that a gate has been established there by suchlike creators (who may or may not have moved on) linking the forest with beast-rich areas on a wild, far continent of Faerûn, or even another plane of existence—perhaps the Beastlands—through which hungry monsters are streaming. There are even some sages who champion illithid or beholder societies as the forest-dwelling monster-breeders... Of course, all that can be said with certainty is that no one knows the true cause of the monster infestation, and that a wide enough variety of monsters has been seen to support almost any wild theory.

Two rivers rise in the Stand. The one that empties to the west (and is born in a spectacular waterfall, down the flank of a sheer cliff in the Neth peaks) is known as the Sarradra, after a lady pirate who of old used to moor her slim raiding ship in its mouth, and slide forth by night to raid shore camps and anchored vessels nearby. Her treasure has never been found, and is thought to lie buried somewhere in the Stand, within sight of the rushing river.

The mouth of the Sarradra has long been a haunt of scrags, who rise to clutch at folk ignorant enough of local perils to try to harvest the wild rice and giant turtles (which can be seen in plenty from passing ships).

The longer river runs northeast to the Lake of Steam, and is called Ranrath's Run, after an adventurer who fled up it (never to be seen again) when hunted down by agents of a long-ago king of Tethyr whom he'd stolen a crown and much gold from. Those stolen riches, too, have never been recovered. The Run is a rich fish-spawning river, and has been successfully fished with long spears from the banks and purse nets by those strong enough to stand in its fast and chilling flow.

The Princess Amriliira of High Mukshar, who ruled that realm for four golden years in the midst of its long line of warrior rulers, died in the Run when her treacherous war-captain Thullusk (seeing himself better suited to the throne) lashed her to her favorite throne and cast her into one of the deep pools in the midst of the Run.

Presumably she's down there still, her bones slumped over a stone seat that was studded with emeralds and sapphires in more profusion than good taste—and which had some sort of magic stored under its seat that could be triggered by the Princess to lash out at persons standing before the throne... a magic that failed to protect her against the traitor.

King Thullusk is remembered as 'the Tentacled' because of the spell that slew him: a curse that made greenish, many-suckered tentacles burst forth all over his body, sapping his blood and vitality until he became a weak, wrinkled thing able only to crawl and slither. The wizard who cast this curse had no desire to rule, and history has forgotten his name, but he brought doom to Thullusk—who died when his revolted courtiers used halberds to thrust the crawling king into his own kitchen hearthfire—only months after the Princess drowned.

At least one overgrown village is known to lie inside the Stand, northwest of Themasulter. Yurbrithee was settled by half-orcs fleeing from an orc war in the Shieldmaidens, and flourished as a source of mast spars (cut by Yurbrithan loggers, who somehow withstood or fought off the Stand monsters) for some seventy years, until it was suddenly abandoned. Why the Yurbrithans fled, and what they left behind, are—like so many questions Borderers harbor about the Stand—mysteries still unsolved. ■

# EVERWINKING EYE

BY ED GREENWOOD

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

## THE MOONFLAME

This magnificent structure is well known within the city of Ravens Bluff as a place of healing, both physically and spiritually. It is located fairly close to the Clearwater Harbor on Raven Way, Morlgar's Ride, MacIntyre Path and O'Kane Court in the center of town just south of the City Park. To the west lays the stables of Norge Greenback's Horses.

The temple itself has a large main dome surrounded by four smaller domes that were constructed utilizing the glassteel spell. The clear domes, as sturdy as armor, allows the clergy to view Selûne each evening. It is truly one of the most spectacular temples in the entire city, especially during the night when the moonlight seems to ignite the glassteel domes in what can only be called "moonflame." Outside, there is a fountain near each street corner depicting each of the four phases of the moon: full-moon, crescent-moon, half-moon and new-moon. Adding to the effect that the fountains provide, the evergreens that are among the grounds make the temple a place of tranquility even during the daytime hours.

nificent one. They were unable to complete and occupy the structure before or during the war, which turned out to be the blessing of Selûne in disguise. The temple was rocked by a viscous assault during the war, aimed at killing their High Priestess, Mirial Moonsilver. Not only did the assault kill Mirial, but 14 other priests and paladins also died in that assault, including Mirial's faithful bodyguard, Grae Angell. Later fighting during the war cost the lives of more priests (Rowel the former thief turned cleric and gentle Mary); over 20 priests and paladins of Selûne died during the Ravens Bluff War. The old temple was rendered barely usable and has since been torn down.

Other more recent clashes within the city have caused some damage to the Moonflame, but some type of protective magic seems to have reduced the damage to the new temple structure. Rumors claim that it was Selûne's Will that the temple not be harmed.

Ceremonies have continued through out the repairs and seem to not be lessened by the goings on around the

# city stories

*THE TEMPLE OF SELÛNE IN RAVENS BLUFF BY BRIAN MILLER*

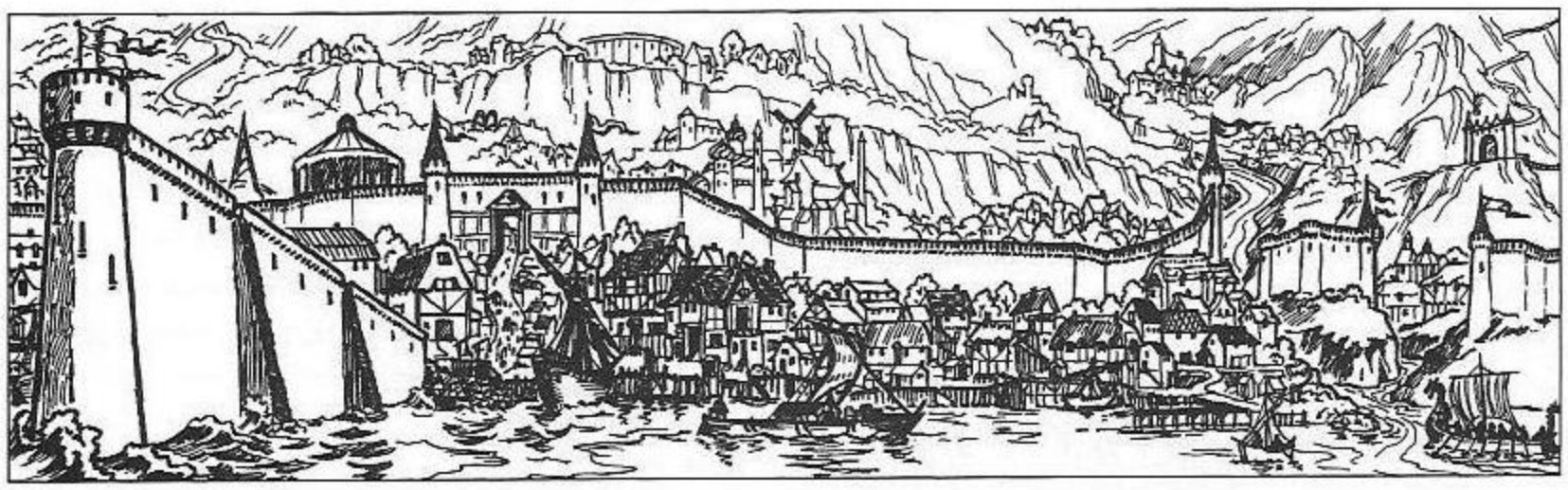
Inside the temple is where everything happens, Through the main doors is a grand entrance hall with murals covering the walls depicting various historical events in Selûne's history. The two smaller staircases lead to the Hall of the Silver Moon on the lower level where anything from banquets to wedding receptions can happen. The larger staircase leads to the main floor of the temple, a hallway leads to the left and right, directly ahead is the Chapel of the Moonflame. This large room is where the clergy performs services. There is a large altar dedicated to the Goddess Selûne, with many pews and benches lining the walls. The marble floor seems to lightly glow as if the room was bathed in dim moonlight even during the daytime hours. The walls are covered with great murals depicting several historic events in Selûne's history, including the famous "Selûne battling Shar" mural. The hallway to the right leads to the quarters of the faithful adventurers of the city who have enrolled at the Temple. Permanent residents of the temple occupy all living quarters in the hallway to the left.

Before the war, the temple of Selûne was a much smaller building. Its growing population of worshippers and clergy had pressured them into building a new temple, this magcity. The most popular celebration of the temple happens during the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. During the day many people burn bayberry candles (till they go out on their own) and hang wreathes of holly. During the night, known as "Alban Arthan," is celebrated at the temple by all that attend and the ceremony is said by some to be one of the most beautiful that happens through out the year. The Moonflame is also well known for its parties (at least every ten-day) that start after dusk and may extend until dawn's early light. The clergy conduct two sacred rituals, the Conjuring of the Second Moon and the Mystery of the Night, but outsiders do not witness these rituals.

Recently, the Moonflame offered lodging to clergy from the Palace of Passion (the temple of Sune). It seems the temple of Sune was destroyed so during the construction of a new temple Sune's clergy will be using many of the Moonflame's quarters.

## PRIESTS AND CLERGY

The high priesthood is split between four specialty priests of Selûne. These four priests represent the phases



of the moon, and each post is occupied by a player character in the LIVING CITY campaign. (For home campaigns, you will have to flesh out these characters.) The selection of four high priests happened a bit over a year ago. The tale really starts with the death of the high priestess, Starglitter, six years ago. She was replaced by Mirial Moonsilver. Mirial was very popular and met, fell in love with, and married Lorien Keltree Darkarrow. Mirial was slain about two years ago, and was temporarily replaced by a high priestess named Jenethra Mooncrown. Jenethra was also slain during the war, and for the next few months, Arial Nightglow tended the beleaguered temple as best she could until the new High Initiates were selected. Officially, the four clergy went on a daring mission for the glory of Selûne, and Selûne was so pleased that she made known her desire that each share, for a quarter of the moon, the leadership of the temple. Some of the more dubious wags in Ravens Bluff argue the selection was mere practicality, so that the Moonflame would have "spares" for when the next high priestess is slain.

**High Initiate of the Full Moon**

Aric Moonstone, werebear male Silverstar (played by Bill Reynolds of Georgia)

Aric was gifted by Selûne sometime near the beginning of the war, as a werebear he has a somewhat unique perspective on life. He loves to have fun and is often seen enjoying himself in the company of his friend Lorien Keltree Darkarrow, husband of the former High Priestess of the Temple. Widely known for his good taste in cigars, Aric is popular amongst many people in the Bluff.

**High Initiate of the Crescent Moon**

Amanda Redmoon, half-elven female Silverstar/Mage (played by Brian Miller of Ohio)

Amanda stands just over five feet tall, her long red hair falls to just below her waist and enhances her emerald green eyes, that are said to sparkle when she is having fun. She is known to be wearing whatever is in fashion at the time and always seems to have just the right outfit for any occasion. Amanda is known throughout Ravens Bluff as being one of the most beautiful women in the city.

Amanda is a strong-willed, independent and kind-hearted woman; she is willing to do whatever it takes to help keep the city safe. She often helps out people that need assistance with the little problems that life brings them. While in an adventuring party Amanda takes it upon herself to make sure everyone comes home safely. Titles don't mean much as far as she is concerned; it's the actions of the individual that stand out and make Ravens Bluff a great place to call home.

**High Initiate of the Half Moon**

Valas Stargazer-Blackmantle, human female Silverstar/Mage (played by Aaron Martin of Ohio)

Valas Stargazer-Blackmantle is 5'9" with black hair and blue eyes. She is normally found wearing sailor garb, including loose blouse and pants, and adorned with the holy symbol of Selûne and symbols of the Knight of the Pillars of the Realm and of the Doves. She is usually pleasant and cheerful, looking for the good in all people and situations. Valas' one true love is sailing. Most of her free time is spent on one of the Blackmantle ships, for work or for pleasure.

Valas was married to the late Quincy Blackmantle, Rear Admiral of the Ravens Bluff navy. Since the passing of her husband, she has been able to keep up her happy and polite nature. Her skills in diplomacy are well known within the temple and she is often the one to organize gatherings of many types at the temple.

**High Initiate of the New Moon**

Daren of Selûne, human male Silverstar (played by Gregg Peevers of Toronto, Canada)

Daren was born a third son to a farming family in the Dalelands. He grew up fascinated by books, where he discovered amongst other things the magnificence of Selûne. Always remembering his roots, Daren has tried to remain in touch with the common people and has eschewed all titles the city has tried to grant him. Even as High Initiate of the New Moon, Daren has tried to remain a humble priest.

Daren has a slight build, standing 5'8". He looks to be in his late 20's. He has a fair complexion with short, straight black hair, dark, almost black eyes, and elven ears. The ears are rumored to have been a magically-created effect rather than natural.

**Moonmistress Arial Nightglow**

Human female 9th Level Cleric

| | |
|---|---|
| Height: 5'6" | Weight: 105 pounds |
| Age: 38 years old | Hit Points: 56 |
| Hair: Light brown | Eyes: Green |
| Alignment: Chaotic Good | |

Arial is the former chief assistant to Murial Moonsilver; she took over the responsibilities of High Moonmistress after the war. Arial always planned on giving the title over to someone else if that opportunity ever presented itself. She was happy that Selûne chose someone else for those responsibilities. However, as the senior priestess in the temple, and with the high priest changing every few days, she effectively runs the temple. She is content with this role, but secretly wishes Selûne had chosen a single high priest so that she would not have such responsibilities. Arial has started to think recently about leaving Ravens Bluff to head up another temple of Selûne, and is starting to make inquiries.

Although by nature a quiet person, Arial has gotten used to being a leader within the temple. She is very calm (normally) and careful in preparation of rituals; yet she partakes in dancing during the ten-day parties. It is well known that she hates the priests of Talos, and it is rumored that she still pays a bounty of 50 gold pieces for each head of a Stormlord. Arial wears tasteful dresses in emerald green and blues.

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

**Maid of the Waxing Auburn Bright**
Human female 8th Level Cleric
Height: 6'2"" Weight: 165 pounds
Age: 31 years old Hit Points: 58
Hair: Blonde Eyes: Blue
Alignment: Chaotic Good

Auburn is the "holy warrior" of the Moonflame. She is stoic and doesn't take much grief from anyone. Auburn was responsible for rallying the remaining priests into driving away the remaining Talosian forces when the temple was attacked during the war. She cares about the temple very much as it has been her home for much of her life.

Her blonde hair is kept in a tight braid that does not flatter her tall, muscular figure. Auburn dresses in browns that clash with her ruddy complexion. She is awkward in crowds and seldom relaxes during the parties. Sometimes she prowls outside the temple at night, although never going far. She frequently trains with the few paladins of Selûne that are in Ravens Bluff.

**Maid of the Waning Myla Norrin**
Human female 8th Level Silverstar
Height: 5'8" Weight: 107 pounds
Age: 23 years old Hit Points: 44
Hair: Blonde Eyes: Blue
Alignment: Chaotic Good

Myla was a street urchin who was taken in by the temple years ago and made service to Selûne her life. She is normally a cheerful person seeking to help the orphans of the street. Now that the war is over and the temple repairs have been completed, she is in the process of getting funding from the temple to establish a home for such children.

Myla dresses in very plain blue and white robes for normal day attire. She is friendly to strangers but avoids discussions of the war. On the anniversaries of the deaths of the previous high priestesses, Myla takes to her room, quietly sobbing her grief.

**Envoy Sorlem Mimbrym**
Human male 6th Level Fighter
Height: 6'1" Weight: 178 pounds
Age: 32 years old Hit Points: 72
Hair: Dark brown Eyes: Steel Grey
Alignment: Neutral Good

Sorlem was visiting Ravens Bluff when the war started, deciding to stay and help out as best that he could. Specializing in the Moon's Hand Mace as a symbol of his devotion to the Night White Lady, he personally saw to the defense of the temple during the war. Now that the war is over, he is commonly seen traveling to various places within the city, or even to locations outside the city on important business for the temple.

Sorlem wears green and brown hues in clothing and is very devoted to his faith. Temple gossip is that he is smitten with Arial; should she ever leave Ravens Bluff, Sorlem is likely to go with her.

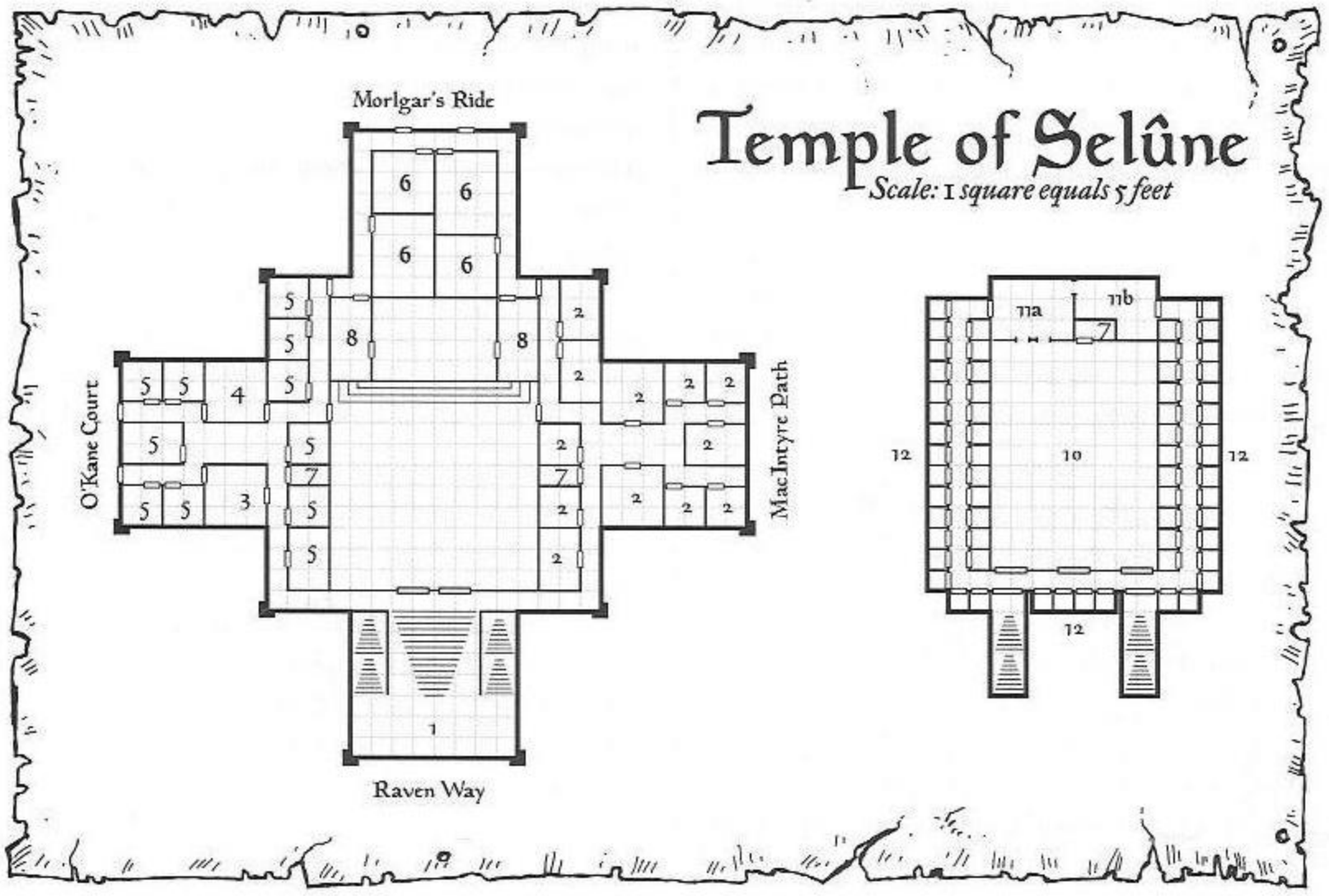
**Moonhand Arakha Dunsoun**
Human female 5th Level Cleric
Height: 5'11" Weight: 143 pounds
Age: 26 years old Hit Points: 40
Raven black hair, blue eyes
Alignment: Lawful Good

Arakaha, a slim, attractive woman who wears blues or blacks with silver jewelry, arrived after the war to help rebuild the ministry. She is unusually strict for a priestess of Selûne, but is a kind person.

Arakha's primary concern is for the safety of all of those who are within the temple grounds. On occasions, sailors drink a bit too much of the temple's popular luminous green moonwine. It's one of the Moonhand's responsibilities to keep the tranquil atmosphere. During her spare time she likes to read about various topics from all around Faerun. ■

## MAP KEY

1. Entrance Hall: historic murals, stairs up and down
2. Adventuring Clergy's quarters: various rooms to house the city's followers
3. Common Room: recreational room for passing the time
4. Small Library: a small selection of books
5. Clergy Living Quarters
6. High Priests Living Quarters
7. Privy: small washroom
8. Antechamber: preparation areas for services
9. Chapel of the Moonflame: Altar to Selûne, large glassteel dome, murals
10. Hall of the Silver Moon: doubles as a dining hall
11. Kitchen area
    - 11a. Food preparation area
    - 11b. Food storage area
12. Public sleeping rooms: one copper a night



# SCORCHED ONE

**CLIMATE/TERRAIN:** Desert
**FREQUENCY:** Very Rare
**ORGANIZATION:** Solitary
**ACTIVITY CYCLE:** Day
**DIET:** Nil
**INTELLIGENCE:** High (13-14)
**TREASURE:** R, V
**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral Evil

---

**NO. APPEARING:** 1
**ARMOR CLASS:** 2
**MOVEMENT:** 12
**HIT DICE:** 7+2
**THACO:** 13
**NO. OF ATTACKS:** 1
**DAMAGE/ATTACK:** 1-8
**SPECIAL ATTACKS:** Dehydration, spells
**SPECIAL DEFENSES:** +1 or better weapons to hit, see below
**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** 10%
**SIZE:** M (5' to 6')
**MORALE:** Fanatic (17)
**XP VALUE:** 5,000

A merciless scourge of the desert, the scorched one is the undying remains of a human that succumbed to the oppressive arid climate. This undead creature draws its strength from the searing desert sun, and hates all living things that trespass upon its territory.

The scorched one wanders the desert in the tattered and weather-beaten remains of what it had in life. Its visage is burnt and cracked, and the body of a scorched one appears to be dehydrated in the extreme. They often wander towards desert caravans or adventuring parties, appearing to be a lone emaciated traveler. At a distance, they wave to the living and speak in a horse, cracked voice, calling for help. It is only when the potential victims are too close that their mistake to aid the "wanderer" is revealed.

**Combat:** Like many other powerful intelligent undead creatures, such as the lich and vampire, a scorched one will seldom engage in direct physical combat, as the spell-like abilities it has are formidable. However, if pressed, a scorched one will wade into melee.

In hand-to-hand combat, a scorched one inflicts 1d8 points of damage with its powerful, burning touch. The more dangerous aspect of this touch is that it will dehydrate a victim unless the creature touched rolls a successful saving throw vs. death magic. If unsuccessful, the creature will begin to suffer from a type of heat stroke as its body dehydrates. The victim will suffer ld8 points of damage each round, as well as being affected by insatiable thirst for the duration. This effect lasts ld4 rounds. Multiple blows add to the duration of the effect.

The scorched one also possesses formidable spell-like abilities. The creature has the power to cast the following spells as special abilities once per day, at 14th level: continual light, sol's searing orb, and sunray. In addition, the following spell-like special abilities can be used twice per day, at 14th level: light, sunscorch, and insatiable thirst.

Due to the nature of their undying state, scorched ones are immune to sleep, charm, hold, and death spells, as well as all spells that affect the mind. The creatures also possess immunity to normal weapons; a +1 or better weapon is required to harm them. They are also able to regenerate 1 hit point every round, unless the damage comes from acid, cold, or water.

Unlike most other undead however, scorched ones are fueled by the oppressive power of the desert sun. They are immune to fire- and sun-based spells (even ones that specifically do more harm to undead), but suffer at the hands of cold or water-based attacks. Cold-based attacks do +1 per die of damage against them. Scorched ones save vs. water-based attacks at a –2 penalty, and if the attacks inflicts damage, that damage is doubled.

Scorched ones may be destroyed completely in only one way: total immersion in water. It does not matter how this is accomplished, so long as the entire body of the creature is immersed in water. If a scorched one is stricken down, and has not yet regenerated enough damage to rise again, it may be incapacitated by cutting off its head. This will render it immobile until the next sunrise, at which time its body and head will turn to dust and reform under the desert sun.

**Habitat/Society:** Scorched ones are solitary wanderers that traverse the desert wastes in search of intelligent humanoid life. Once the undead creatures find the objects of their hatred, they destroy without hesitation.

Scorched ones are believed to come into being when a human has been purposefully cast out into the desert, and dies from the intense heat and lack of water. The hatred of the individual towards those who cast him or her out is so intense as to cause the corpse rise again as a scorched one. The creature's hatred for one individual or group soon develops into a hatred for all humanoids, in particular humans. It then spends its unlife roaming the wastes, in search of a way to sate its hatred.

These undead creatures have also been known to track a caravan or adventuring company for days through the desert, studying the strengths and weaknesses of their foes. When the creature thinks it has gathered enough information and has the best tactical opportunity, then it attacks.

It is not known how a scorched one draws its power from the sun, which is the antithesis of most undead creatures. However, sages speculate that the creature's connection with the Negative Material Plane may be far weaker than most other intelligent undead.

**Ecology:** As with most other undead, the scorched one contributes nothing to its environment. It is a wandering ravager, killing all humanoids it encounters. It is a creature that the nomadic desert tribes fear more than the oppressive sun, and travelers often leave the desert as quickly as possible if it is rumored a scorched one was seen. The supernatural presence of a scorched one will cause animals such as horses and camels to become skittish and frightful.

It is not known how these creatures feed, although it is speculated that they draw their sustenance directly from the sun and sand. A scorched one has never been sighted outside of a hot, dry desert, lending further support to this fact. ■

**The Best AD&D® Monster event in the Club Decathlon produced some interesting critters. Chris Tulach's Scorched One placed second. The winners, two versions of the Rusalka, will appear in the POLYHEDRON® 1999 Annual, available at the GEN CON® Game Fair or through back-order afterwards.**

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

# rockroost hunters & gatherers

*A LIVING CITY™ BUSINESS*
*BY JAMES C. ALPETER*

When spellcasters of the Living City need organic components or extra food for a celebration, Rockroost Hunters are usually called in for the job. They can be found just outside the Merchant District, north of the city wall. The two-story building is made of stone, but the windows are shuttered tight as the sign sways in the gentle coastal breeze. The business is open, as evidenced by the number of individuals entering the building.

The business is run by the Rockroost family. The Rockroost family consists of Warden, his wife Gwendolyn, and his brother Warren. Together, they struggle to make the business work and to be profitable. What the business provides is hunting services for those individuals unable to hunt who enjoy the taste of fresh game. They also gather organic components for priests and wizards who don't have time to gather their own. Lastly, they provide/supply owners of magic shops who can't/won't get dirty gathering their own supplies.

The major opposition to the business isn't from the Wizard's Guild, but from the Merchant's Guild. The senior members of the Merchant's Guild believe that members of Fighter's Guilds should be content guarding caravans, not going into business for themselves. Thorm Sureblade, leader of the Independent Fighter's Guild, empathizes with the Rockroost brother's situation and understands their thinking. The Rockroost brothers feel that as long as the Fighter's Guild doesn't have a demand for powerful warriors, then the Rockroost brothers should be able to make a living and keep their skills honed. However, Thorm cannot give more than moral support, a situation that the brothers understand. A guild war between the Fighter's Guild and their largest employer is an undesirable situation. So, the Rockroost brothers are making a go of the business on their own.

The current situation began when Warden Rockroost applied for a business permit, his business was classified as a unique service. News travels fast in Ravens Bluff, however, and the Merchant Guild members were quite displeased that the Merchant's Guild wasn't consulted when the permit was being classified. When "guild members" (actually members of the Thug's Guild) went to convince the brothers into joining the Merchant's Guild, the family sent the thugs running. The brothers saw no need to join the Merchant's Guild when they merely wanted to make extra money by selling some of the by-products of their adventuring.

Over a period of time, about a winter or so, the legal challenge to the Rockroosts' business permit moved through the courts. At every turn, the business prevailed in the legal arena. This is because Warden made sure every 'i' was dotted and every 't' was crossed. Eventually, in Ravens Bluff's highest court Torden Sureblade refused to listen to the case, dismissing it because no city laws were broken. The Lord Magistrate considers the point to be settled legally, and has instructed that no further court time is to be devoted to the case, especially since the Rockroost business fits more into the definition of a service, and a unique one at that. Since then, the Merchant's Guild has officially backed off pressuring the Rockroost business to join the guild. However, 'accidental' nuisances continue to plague the business; the original building was burnt down, customers are scared away occasionally, and there has been more than one attack on the family. The battles and skirmishes between the two parties continue up to the present.

Prices for the Rockroost's services depend on what an individual wants and when they want it. Each purchase is negotiated at the time the order is placed, and regular customers receive mundane components for free. The free give-aways are mundane items that are collected for them by hunters that: the business hires to do the hunting; Premiums are only given away if some other service, either component gathering or hunting, is negotiated. If spell components only are ordered, then whatever the present price for the component in Ravens Bluff is charged. Repetitive give aways are avoided because careful records are kept on who uses/buys how much of a particular component over a given period of time.

The very nature of the business itself would turn any individual into an evil ghoul without some code of ethics to govern its operation. First, the business refuses to hunt sentient beings/creatures such as humanoids, dragons and the like. If the by-products of those creatures are desired, then the business agrees to act as the negotiating agent for the interested customer. The brothers then try to hire someone to bargain with the creature type for what has been requested. If the products of sentient beings are incidentally acquired, then there is no compunction about using the by-products for resale. For example, a hunting party was returning from a particularly successful 1arge deer hunt and was intercepted by an adult green dragon. The dragon wanted a tribute of free, fresh meat. After a ferocious battle, the business brought the dragon carcass back and for the next few months had a sale on green dragon scales. Secondly the business never over-hunts an area. Warden takes special pains to keep track of what areas they have hunted and estimated game populations therein

over a period of time. This has cost the business a few lucrative contracts when Warden has refused to hunt for fear it will upset the balance of nature in an area. Third, the business will not accept orders for the by-products of good beings, period. They've refused orders for pixie wings, elf ears, and gold dragon scales. Fourth, they will not deal with individuals who are reputed to be of evil. This determination is not based on rumors, but on the observation of the business owners. Lastly, anything that would go against the laws of Ravens Bluff or the tenets of good will not even be considered for business practices.

The building's layout is as follows, starting from the cellar and ending with the second floor. In the cellar is the main storage area for components that do not need to be frozen. In the main work area, shelves surround the walls that are a foot and a half deep. Work tables for dissection of small animals, such as rodents, take up the central area. The area that contains the frozen storage is kept cool by a wall of ice spell that is cast as a hemisphere at the far corner and allowed to melt. The melting ice is drained through a floor drain, the floor built at a slant to allow the draining to take place.

The ground floor is straightforward, surrounded by a spacious yard. The processing area entrance is protected by an alarm spell, cast before Gwen goes to bed at night. The stable holds three riding horses and Warren's warhorse. Two of the riding horses are used by Gwen and Warden, the third being used as a pack animal. Warren's room contains all of his equipment and the main security for the downstairs, Warren himself. The office contains a desk full of work orders and other papers, and the customer reception area. Often, the office is staffed by Gwen. When Gwen has other duties to attend to, it is staffed by one of the employees who is given specific instructions, written, and followed to the letter. A fighter of levels two to five is also staffed here when Gwen is away, to guard the store. The dining area is where the family, and sometimes the employees, share dinner.

Upstairs are the sleeping quarters for Gwen's mother Glynis, Warden and Gwen's children, and the couple themselves. Also located upstairs is Warden and Gwen's windowless study. Therein, a closet contains unused and/or forgotten equipment and records. The fire escape consists of ladders hanging inside on the wall. These ladders can be put outside easily because the windows pop out easily from the inside by pushing at the bottom. This latter precaution is due to vivid memories of the arson that destroyed their home and business last time.

The buildings and land are debt free. The building is made of stone with a thick tile roof. The windows can be shuttered only from the inside, and the doors can handle many well-placed blows. In game terms, the shutters take 25 points of damage before being smashed in. The door will absorb 35 points of damage before breaking when locked and 50 points of damage when barred. The processing area is also made of stone, including the floor. The whole establishment is quite sturdy and surrounded by a lightly wooded, hilly area, which the business crowns.

**ADVENTURE IDEAS:**

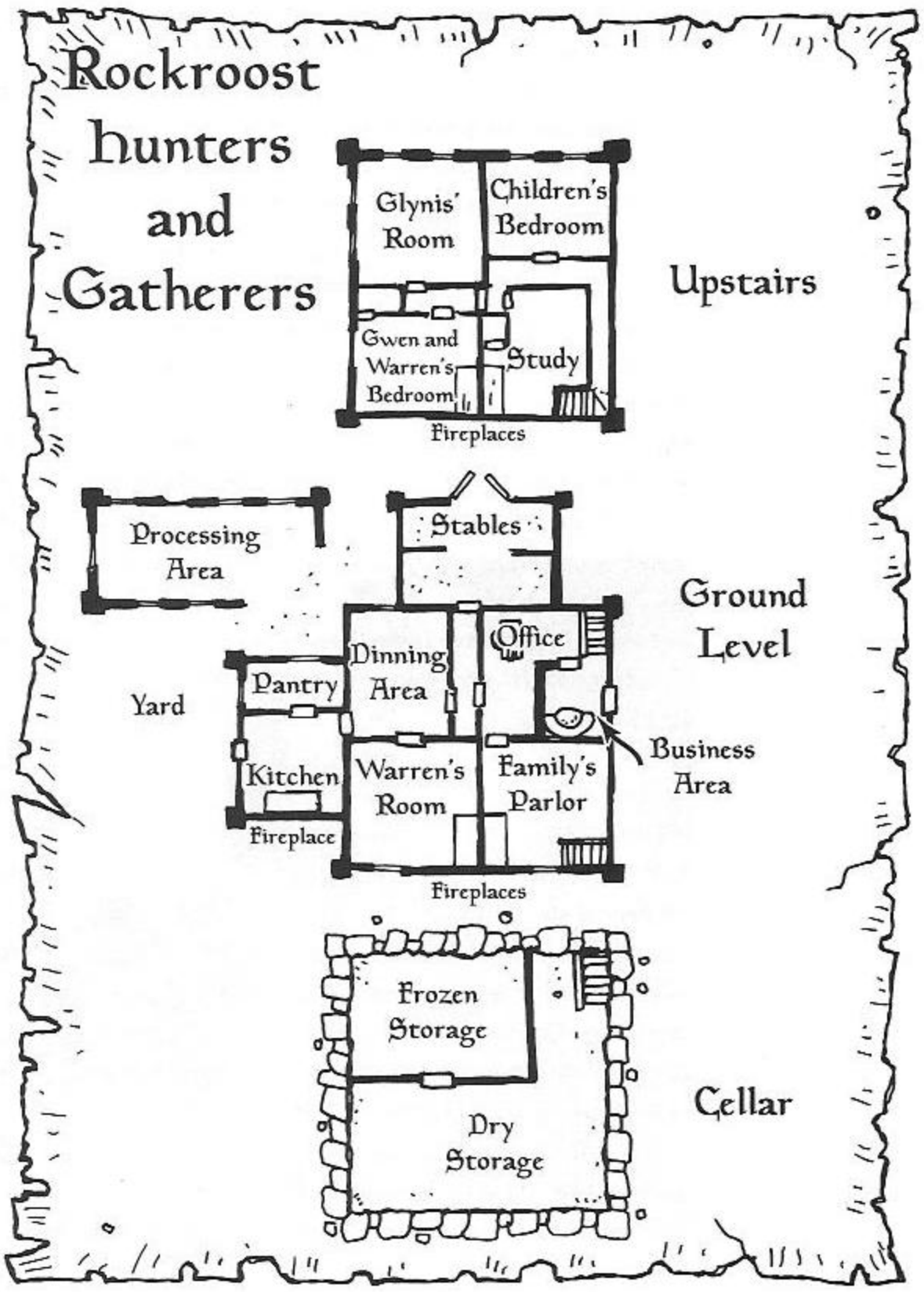
PCs could be hired to negotiate with a powerful creature for some by-product. Such creatures may include chromatic dragons, beholders, or other dangerous creatures.

PCs who are spellcasters could become good customers of the business. Merchant Guild "thugs" could harass the PCs, drawing them into political intrigue. The PCs could also help their new-found friends receive relief from the continued harassment.

Fed up to no end uith the continuing trouble with the Merchant's Guild, the PCs could be hired to gather evidence that the Guild is still trying to force the hunters out of business. If the PCs accept the dangerous difficult assignment, it could be the start of a web of intrigue like they've never seen before.

Seafaring PCs could be hired to bring back a bevy of substances for the business. The substances could be from the Moonsea or the Sea of Fallen Stars. Possibly, the substance(s) is found only underwater and hazards will include monsters, local power groups, pirates, and so on.

The brothers are concerned about a hunting/survey party that left and hasn't returned. Secret instructions were entrusted to the missing group and the brothers want the instructions and the party rescued. If the original party was destroyed, then the heroes could be hired to take over the dangerous mission or recover the instructions.





02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

**Warden Rockroost**
Human Male 9th level Ranger

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 16 | Int 12 |
| Dex 17 | Wis 16 |
| Con 16 | Cha 13 |
| **Height:** 6′ 1″ | **Weight:** 174 |
| **Hair:** black | **Eyes:** blue |
| **Hit Points:** 94 | **Age:** 33 |
| **AC Normal:** 4 | **AC Rear:** 7 |

**Alignment:** Neutral Good
**Languages:** Common
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Composite Longbow, Longsword, Shortsword, Dagger, Hand axe, Shortbow
**Non Weapon Proriciencies:** Tracking (16/+3), Read/Write Common (13), Herbalism (10), Animal Lore (12), Hunting (15), Set Snares (11), Spellcraft (10), Swimming (16)
**Magic Items:** *chainmail +2, longsword +1/+3vs regenerating creatures, ring of truth*
**Ranger Abilities:** Hide in Shadows 61, Move Silently 75

Those that see Warden see a man of sinewy build, with long hair and sparkling eyes. Warden was born and raised in Tantras and has adventured widely in the Dalelands, Bloodstone Lands, and the Vast. The left side of his face bears three claw marks that he received from a troll as a young adventurer. Since that time, he has had an unending hatred of trolls. Due to his scarring, Warden shaves daily and wears a helmet at all times while away from home.

Warden is the guiding force behind the business, supported by Gwen. He keeps the books, keeps track of inventory, and hires adventurers. If that isn't enough, Warden tries to be a good father to his sons Gavin (four winters old), and Burne (two winters old). Warden is the silent determined type, but gives his family first priority.

When PCs meet Warden, he is polite, but shy, gruff, and to the point. As he gets to know someone, he becomes jovial and friendly over a period of a few days. Suspicious individuals are questioned in a non-threatening manner and lies ferreted out by his ring of truth, which he wears constantly. He is a tough negotiator and will bargain anyone he hires to what he believes, and which is, a fair contract. Once someone has earned his loyalty, he is loyal to the death.

**Gwendolyn of Chauntea (Gwen Rockroost)**
Half-elf female 7th level Mage/9th level Cleric

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 13 | Int 17 |
| Dex 16 | Wis 18 |
| Con 14 | Cha 17 |
| **Height:** 5′ 7″ | **Weight:** 133 |
| **Hair:** light brown | **Eyes:** green |
| **Hit Points:** 40 | **Age:** 35 |
| **AC Normal:** 1 | **AC Rear:** 3 |

**Alignment:** Neutral Good (Lawful Tendencies)
**Languages:** Common
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Staff, Dagger, Footman's Mace, Horseman's Mace, Footman's Flail, Horseman's Flail, Sling, Mancatcher
**Non-weapon Proficiencies:** Read/Write Common (18), Agriculture (17), Spellcraft (17/+2), Fire Building (17/+1), Healing (18/+2), Herbalism (17/+2), Religion (18), Cooking (17) Weaving (16), Seamstress/Tailor (15)
**Magic Items:** *bracers of defense AC4, footman's flail +3, girdle of many pouches, ring of protection +1*
**Wizard spellbooks:** 1st level—*affect normal fires, charm person, alarm, cantrip, feather fall, reduce, comprehend languages, magic missile, shield, detect magic, read magic;* 2nd level—*continual light, improved phantasmal force, know alignment, web, invisibility, knock, stinking cloud, wizard lock*; 3rd level—*fireball, invisibility 10′ radius, protection from evil 10′ radius, gust of wind, lightning bolt, protection from normal missiles*; 4th level—*fire shield, minor globe of invulnerability, wall of ice, wizard eye*

Gwendolyn Rockroost began life as Gwendolyn Whitewing, daughter of a farming couple that lived outside of Ravens Bluff a short distance. As a little girl, she was fascinated by farming and watching her now-deceased father work with animals. She grew into a beautiful woman seduced by the beauty of magic. However, after adventuring for a few winters, she returned to her first love, agriculture, and became a cleric of Chauntea. During her travels, she met and was courted by Warden Rockroost several winters ago.

Gwen, as she is known to all, takes orders from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. in the office. She also balances the business' books, and assists Warden in determining the supply and demand of components. All orders must be made while Gwen is in the office or while her substitute is there in her stead. Presently, Gwen is carrying Warden's and her third child.

Since she is a member of the civic clergy, she has duties that she must attend to at certain times of the month. Gwen then turns the office over to one of the employees. Precise orders are written for whoever takes over the office while she is out, and they are explained by Gwen before she leaves. She rarely casts wizard magic anymore, but keeps her spells memorized and ready for an emergency should one arise.

**Warren Rockroost**
Human Male 10th level Fighter

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 18/00 | Int 9 |
| Dex l4 | Wis 11 |
| Con 18 | Cha 16 |
| **Height:** 6′ 8″ | **Weight:** 324 |
| **Hair:** Jet black | **Eyes:** deep blue |
| **Hit points:** 111 | **Age:** 31 |
| **AC Normal:** 0 | **AC Rear:** 0 |

**Alignment:** Neutral (Good Tendencies)
**Languages:** Common
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Longsword (Specialization), Longbow, Dagger, Shortsword, Bastard sword, Battle axe
**Non-weapon Proficiencies:** Blind-fighting, Swimming (18), Horse Riding (14), Animal Handling (10), Hunting (11), Fire Building (10)
**Magic Items:** *plate mail +3, bastard sword +1, longsword +1 flame blade*

Imagine a walking mountain that is handsome as well and you've seen Warren Rockroost. He is jovial, with a voice that

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY



rumbles out like thunder and a sparkle of mischief in his eyes. Warren does odd jobs around the business as well as assist with its running to the best of his ability.

Warren grew up in Tantras with his family, becoming a guardsmen like his father The training that he received there and in the Flaming Fist mercenary company has turned him into a trained killer. Thus, he avoids alchohol since he doesn't want to kill someone accidentally in a brawl. Niether does he want to let his guard down since he states often that many fine warriors have died drunk.

He does have a weakness for fine apple cider and a certain druidess that he prefers not to name. Warren also can be seen about town, always carrying a few bones for King the Dog, and a ball that he has King fetch for hours at a time. His other interests are the safety of his brother's family, playing with his nephews, hunting trips shared only by his brother, and the intense, brutal physical regimen he shares with Warden.

In battle, Warren goes for the quick kill and usually fights two-handed, using a short sword in his secondary hand. If fighting something ferocious and dangerous, he won't hesitate to use a shield instead of a short sword. Most of the time, smart people don't provoke him and are pleasant when dealing with him.

**Glynis Whitewing**
Human Female 0-level

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 9 | Int 14 |
| Dex 12 | Wis 13 |
| Con 12 | Cha 16 |
| **Height:** 5' 7" | **Weight:** 133 |
| **Hair:** gray | **Eyes:** green |
| **Hit Points:** 6 | **Age:** 78 |
| **AC Normal:** 10 | **AC Rear:** 10 |

**Alignment:** Lawful Good
**Languages:** Common
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Woodsmen's axe, Knife, Various farm implements
**Non-weapon Proficiencies:** Read/Write Common (15), Agriculture (14), Cooking (14), Seamstress/Tailor ( 11 ), Swimming ( 11 )

The daughter of a local merchant that married down, Glynis knew nothing about farming. She proved to be a quick study, however, and they became two of the most prosperous farmers in the local area. She also taught herself how to cook as well as sew.

Presently, she lives with the youngest of her four children and second daughter. She cares for the children, cooks, and keeps the place clean. Her youngest son works her land, providing food for the household and keeping the land in her family. Although worried they are working to hard, she is pleasantly surprised at the lack of disagreement between Gwen and Warden.

**Clifton Brandt**
Human Male 0-level

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 11 | Int 11 |
| Dex14 | Wis 9 |
| Con 11 | Cha 13 |
| **AC Normal:**10 | |
| **Height:** 5' 8" | **Weight:** 185 |
| **Hair:** brown | **Eyes:** brown |
| **Hit Points:** 4 | **Age:** 20 |

**Alignment:** Neutral (Lawful tendencies )
**Languages:** Common
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Hand Axe, Knife
**Non-weapon Proficiencies:** Read/Write Common (12), Butchering (11), Swimming (11)

Cifton Brandt is the son of a butcher that didn't want to clean and prepare the same types of animals day in and day out. Clifton jumped at the chance to offered by the Rockroost brothers and has worked faithfully for them ever since. He enjoys working on fantastic creatures, the more fantastic the better. In a pinch, he can defend himself with a hand axe or knife. Clifton carries a woodsmen's knife in a belt sheaf during his travels through the city.

Clifton is barrel-chested and stocky. He looks cherubic, even with a beard and moustache, looks which give him a certain charm. He is clean and immaculate to a fault, not wanting anyone to think he is an ordinary "slaughterhouse slob." Clifton carries this attitude over into his work as well. ■

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

# the house of spice

BY TERENCE G. KEMPER

"Come along, my good friends, for I have received a most interesting invitation, and what is even better, I have been asked to bring 'a few interesting friends,' and, who could be more so than some successful and attractive adventurers. Sooo, mind your manners, for an opportunity like this one is rare enough. It might well result in profit as well as a good meal and excellent entertainment. . . Come, right this way, follow me past the Old Wall."

Shortly, our company of adventurers find themselves before a large, almost fortress-like house, with a square stone tower rearing up behind it and low wall before it. This Great House is the town home of Yeffres Mehaut, the wealthy Spice Merchant of Ravens Bluff. Both the man and his house have extraordinary stories to tell . . ."

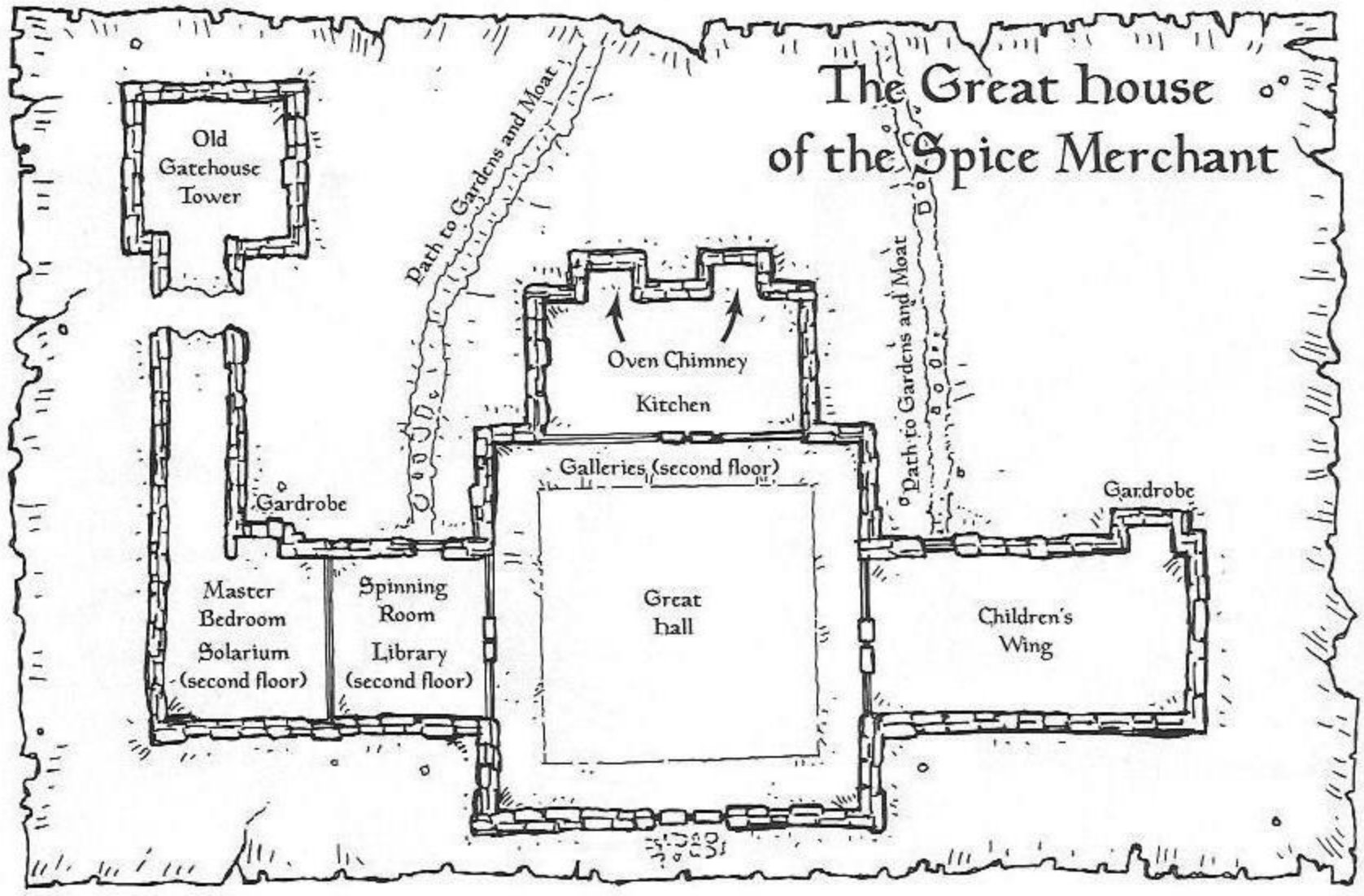
"As to the man, Yeffres Mehaut is a powerful man who comes from a humble beginning. He was, as he not humbly admits, a pack peddler in the days of his youth. But such was his business acumen that he progressed quickly from pack to donkey to pony cart until this day he controls several companies, including one of longshoremen, one of carters (he owns his own stables and liveries), and cargo vessels.

"He was once a wandering bard and found that spices made a nice, small but expensive bundle that he could easily carry, even on foot. He found ready markets wherever he traveled and quickly expanded his operations, banding together with other pack peddlers to form a loose company and then buying transport of whatever kind they could afford. Some of those early fellow peddlers who supported him in those days are wealthy men today, and some are dead. By the time he was 21, he had bought his first ship, just a 'small' packet ship, but, nevertheless, which soon multiplied into a half-dozen, just as his pony carts had multiplied on land. Enough of him, for Yeffres can perfectly well tell his own tales, for he was once a bard, as you know.

"The Great House is an impressive building composed of limestone blocks from the Old Wall, covered over with stuccoes. The massive roof is supported by huge cedar trusses and is tiled over with red barrel tile. So distinctive is the house that one can easily see it from the harbor. Luxury abounds within; come, let us follow the servant who awaits us in the Mehaut livery of bright orange, with the well-known clasp of the griffon rampant over the spice jar, at her upper left shoulder.

"As you pass through the thick wooden doors with the Crest of the House of Mehaut, you quickly notice the rich, blood-red and ivory wool rugs from Tamal-tan with their traditional loops and swirls in gold, emerald green and black. Golden wall sconces bear tall tapers of pure, scented beeswax. As we pass through the atrium, we see long key-hole-shaped pools with rose and citrus scented waters gushing in the courtyard. From somewhere beyond our view, up ahead, come the soft swirling sounds of a flute,the gentle rhythm of drums and the clatter of castanets. Entering another large room, we see multi-hued tapestries hanging on the smooth stucco walls. Hardly have we stopped walking and taken in the gold, ivory and marble statues and the mosaic beneath our feet than a resplendent servant appears to greet us and winds up for a long-winded speech when he is interrupted by none other than our host himself."

"Oh, come, Longsleeves, let us dispense with the flowery speech and speak plainly as the men of the road do," begins Yeffres himself, having appeared suddenly. "I am Yeffres Mehaut himself, but all of my friends call me Geoffrey. After all, I was born here in Ravens Bluff, although I bear such a strange name. Come, this way . . ."



**Yeffres Mehaut, Spice Merchant**
Human Male 9th level Bard

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 12 | Int 17 |
| Dex 10 | Wis 16 |
| Con 9 | Cha 17 |
| AC 8 | AC Rear: 9 |

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral
**Languages:** Common, Elven, Dwarvish, Halfling
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dagger, Shortsword
**Non-weapon Proficiencies:** Appraising (18); Bargaining (17); Direction Sense (16); Herbalism (Spice Lore) (18); Musical Instruments Lyre (15), Flute (16)
**Hobbies:** Gardening and falconry
**Armor:** Leather armor and shield, Iron Cap
**Usual spell selection:** Level one: *affect normal fires; charm person; detect magic; Level two: alter self; continual light; invisibility*; Level three: *flame arrow; tongues*
**Bard Abilities:** Climb Walls 75, Detect Noise 60, Pick Pockets 60, Read Languages 30

Yeffres is a handsome man of about 45 years of age and stands about 5'10" and 160 pounds, and, like many men of his ethnic group, is broad in the shoulders and narrow in the waist with big thighs. His shoulder-length hair is straight and auburn, setting off his green eyes.

He is a tough business competitor and will use any means to defend and enlarge his market share in the spice trade. He is an excellent host and has recently begun taking etiquette lessons from a well-known courtier. Although he prefers discreet bribery to attain his ends, he is reputed to play 'hardball' against unscrupulous competitors and his vengeance is something to be feared. Despite his outward worldliness, he can be a man of great passion, especially when it concerns the unwanted male admirers of his lovely wife, Micaela. More than one so-called 'troubadour' has been sent packing from his Great House in the middle of the night for 'unsolicited advances' to the hostess.

He is an expert appraiser of spices and certain other fine, portable goods and his skill at getting a bargain price is little short of legendary. He has taken up falconry and has several fine birds in his mews at the Great House and his country estates.

**Micaela Mehaut, herbalist**
Half-elf Female 9th level Priestess of Lliira

| | |
|---|---|
| Str 10 | Int 16 |
| Dex 16 | Wis 13 |
| Con 12 | Cha 17 |
| AC 8 | AC Rear 10 |

**Alignment:** Neutral Good
**Languages:** Common, Elven, Halfling
**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dagger, Net, Lasso
**Non-weapon Proficiencies:** Agriculture (17); Animal Lore (12); Dancing (16); Healing (18); Herbalism (flowers & herbs) (18); Reading/Writing Common (13).

Despite having borne six children, Madame Mehaut is quite, shall we say, striking? Her hair is dark brown and curly with reddish highlights. Her eyes are dark brown and slanted like most of the people of Tamal-tan, and her skin is a rich, pale gold that glistens with expensive oils. She stands a lithe 5'6" when she is motionless, which is rare, and she weighs a mere 126 pounds.

She met Yeffres at a large party her parents threw in far-off Tamal-tan. Even though a members of the aristocracy, she danced with all the grace and sensuousness of a gypsy girl, with her castanets, pellet balls and little cymbals.

It was love at first sight, but her parents disapproved of Yeffres at first. He pursued her earnestly and at last his business acumen and obvious charm and worldliness convinced them to give their consent.

Micaela loves to preside over weddings, spring fertility dances and birth ceremonies and has created special dances for each occasion. Birth— red wine libation to Lliiria and the Dance of Joy. At the finish, she presents the baby with a toy musical instrument, red grapes and a statuette of Lliiria. Wedding—Dance of Fertility—scatters white rose petals and St. John's Wort (yellow powder) on the bride and groom and sprinkles them with orange blossom perfume as they say their vows. Spring — Dance of Resurrection—green and white robes with yellow and orange blouses and long garlands of multi-colored flowers. As a priestess of Lliira, she wears skin-tight tri-color tights, sometimes with loose, diaphanous pantaloons, of orange, yellow and red.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

### TAKE ME TO THE NEXT COUNTY FAIR:

Each year in late summer, Ravens Bluff holds its Herb & Spice Fair. The main location is at the Central Market. Over the years as the fair grew, other nearby squares were added. Temporary booths, usually owned by the vendors themselves and gypsy carts and wagon spring up in the newly authorized areas.

Originally, only the sale of spices and herbs was permitted, but no one could resist the temptation to sell almost anything. At night, entertainers of all sorts mob the squares and platforms along the main streets. Strolling musicians, jugglers, dancers, tightrope walkers, fire eaters and trained animal acts all vie for the crowd's approval and coins.

Yeffres is frequently a major sponsor of the entertainment and organizer of the Fair, and invites bards and entertainers from far and away. On this occasion, one of the judges of the musicians and bards has not arrived It is now three days before the competition and Yeffres is becoming concerned.) The missing judge is the esteemed bard, Virdis Windreed. Virdis has been off adventuring with a female companion, as usual, and although he has never before been late the Fair, he is going to need the help of some swift player characters to arrive on time this year.

### 2. OLD ENEMIES:

Three of Yeffres' old enemies, Matt Small, a halfling merchant, Aaron Chandler, a human shipwright, and Tholf Goldhelm, a dwarf goldsmith, part of a small and dwindling group, have secretly gotten together to 'off' the great Spice Merchant. Yeffres is accosted in the streets by an itinerant bard, who warns him of the plot. Yeffres does not believe it at first, but after an apparent attack fails he sends for the player characters to check out the story and, if true, to bring the conspirators back 'dead or alive.'

### 3. BLOOD & SPICES:

A band of highway bandits has all but closed the road to Ismalan, causing the prices of myrrh and saffron to soar. A group of smaller merchants has approached Yeffres to ask for his aid in battling the bandits. He agrees and sends Longsleeves to approach the player characters to serve as scouts and guards on a caravan.

As a twist, it is conceivable that Yeffres has tipped off the highway bandits as to the time-tables of rival merchants' caravans to drive up prices. Some have noted that his caravans have suffered less than those of other merchants. It is debated whether this is coincidence or not. In this case, another merchant may be hiring the characters. The PCs may discover his complicity through 'stolen' goods turning up in his warehouses or through the loose lips of a bandit in a tavern. ■

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

On an island upriver from the city, yet still very much within its boundary, is a slum of tumbledown shacks and aged and decrepit buildings. Here dwell the city's poorest of the poor, unprotected even by the city's great wall, and spurned by all of the citizens except the most charitable and kind at heart. It is by no means safe in this area, called Smuggler's Town, for here also dwell the lowest class of thieves in the city, the thugs, the ruffians, the cutthroats, and the snatch and grab robbers. Welcome, travelers to the Living City! If you will continue on this way, stay on the road itself where the watchmen of the City Watch can protect you! Do not step off the road even for a moment. Disregard their plantive cries for aid; ignore the paltry baubles and cheap cloth that they proffer; do not accept the food and drink that they offer. In short, beware!

Here in the slums dwells Dick Corder, also known as Blind Dick or Tumbledown Dick. He lives in a miserable hovel amidst other miserable hovels. When it rains, Dick Corder gets wet, and when the cold winds blow the snow in the pits of the winter, Dick Corder gets cold and huddles in his worn and bedraggled blanket, dreaming of an early spring. . .

Daybreak finds Blind Dick in his place by the west gate, dressed in his worst clothes; he has better ones at 'home', but who would give to a well-dressed beggar. Tin cup in hand, a fresh rag wrapped around his missing eye and stooped and looking miserable, Dick begins his daily rounds of earning enough coppers to feed himself and 'Brown', his flea-bitten dog and sole companion.

"Alms for a poor blind man! I beg of you, kind sir, a few coppers! Alms for the poor! Alms for the poor! Spare me a penny, pretty maiden!" goes his cry as he goes bent and stooped up and down the West Road.

# no honor among thieves

*BLIND DICK*
*A PERSONALITY OF THE LIVING CITY*
*BY TERENCE G. KEMPER*

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY



**"Blind Dick" Corder**

Human Male 6th Level Thief

Str 12

Int 10

Dex 14

Wis 11

Con 13

Cha 7

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Languages:** Common, Dwarven

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Blackjack, Dagger, Battered old Shortsword

**Non-Weapon Proficiencies:** Begging (14); Back Stabbing (12); Fast-Talking (14); Information Gathering (12); Rope Use (15); Trailing (13).

**Thief skills:**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Pick Pockets* 45% | *Open Locks* 40% |
| *Find/Remove Traps* 35% | *Move Silently* 50% |
| *Hide in Shadows* 45% | *Detect Noise* 55% |
| *Climb Walls* 60% | *Read Languages* 0% |

Dick Corder stands 5'6" when he stands up straight, which he never does, and weighs 135 pounds. His hair is black going grey with a large bald spot at the back of his head, which he covers with a greasy brown wool cap. He has a scraggly salt & pepper beard which comes to a point at his chin. His age is indeterminate, but probably between 35 and 40. He wears castoff clothing, saving the worst to beg in and on cold days wears his blanket as a cloak and fingerless gloves.

He was blinded some ten years ago when a taut rope he was working on snapped and struck him in the eye, putting it out. His vision in his good right eye is beginning to go bad too, perhaps 20/60 or thereabouts.

Living on the edge of poverty and starvation has forced Blind Dick to be an amoral opportunist. He has done everything from moving furniture to killing obnoxious dogs for the spiteful. He lacks the courage to kill or even fight a human being, hence he is at the bottom of the scale for both thieves and beggars.

Sometimes, when some kind-hearted traveler has thrown him a silver or even a gold, he buys some cheap pewter silverware and sells it from a board in the slum square, usually he just begs unless a thieves' guild gives him a message to carry out of town. He will sell information to the highest bidder and even though illiterate, he will somehow discover the contents of any message he carries and sell it to any rival thief that is interested. He is loyal to a tiny handful of friends and totally amoral to all others.

A sneaky coward, Dick is occasionally vindictive, especially when physically mistreated or really, really yelled at. In private, he sneers at his enemies and at the world in general. His 'loyalty' to all but a few close friends is measured by the weight of the gold in his hand. He will be most often encountered by the west gate, accosting strangers for a silver or a copper. He does know his way about the slums and the lower class areas of the city of Ravens Bluff.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. Engaged by the PCs to guide them through the 'lower city,' Blind Dick performs the lone courageous deed of his entire life, stopping a runaway horse bearing the young daughter of a rich merchant. The merchant is generous with his praise and settles on the beggar 100 gp a year for the rest of Blind Dick's mortal life (more than enough to lift this simple soul out of poverty). Dick asks one or more of the PCs to accompany him to find his young wife whom he has not seen in six or seven years (she'd be in her late 20's) in the middle class quarter of the City. It is up to the DM's discretion as to how, when and where they find her, and her reaction to seeing Blind Dick again. Will she be angry, surprised, pleased, or simply puzzled?

2. Blind Dick is carrying a message from one thieves' guild in Ravens Bluff to another on the outskirts of town. The PCs have been hired to follow him and find the thieves' den. In the course of the journey they may pass through the Two Brothers' Butchery, The Dancing Bear Inn, Misti Morgan's Moonlight Pawnshop, The Painted Boat Inn (outside the harbour), or The Cat in the Sun tavern (all features published in Polyhedron), or other businesses of the DM's choice. Are the PCs successful or are they discovered and set upon by some or all of the thieves? Does a PC offer Blind Dick a goodly sum of money to let him read the message and apprehend the thieves? What of Blind Dick, does he flee or betray his thief employers for money? ■

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

# the happy hippocampus

*AN INN & TAVERN IN PROCAMPUR*
*BY DANIEL COOPER*

The LIVING CITY campaign encompasses more than just Ravens Bluff. The Jewel of the Vast, that city called Procampur, is also part of the campaign milieu, and as a city is very distinct from free-wheeling Ravens Bluff. In this bar, however, Ravenians should feel right at home.

Everybody needs a place to stay when in town, and they usually want food and often drinks while staying there. Also, a tavern is occasionally a good place to pick up information and tips about local events and adventuring possibilities. Procampur has its fair share of taverns and inn, scattered across several districts; this is one of the more popular.

Founded in 1364 DR on the site of an out-of-business brothel, the Happy Hippocampus was founded by Bialtor Doogen upon his discharge from the naval branch of the Diamond Legion. His wife Rieggei's enlistment with the Procampan Marines also had just expired, and the couple worked day and night refurbishing. Three months later, the Happy Hippocampus opened its doors to the public, and was overnight success with the sailors and marines of Procampur. The rowdier members of those services tried to establish the Hippocampus as a hangout during the inn's first few months of business, but those who attempted it were usually found by the Diamond Legion deposited outside the tavern doors nursing their bruised bodies.

After a few months of business, the atmosphere of the tavern settled down. While the clientele is boisterous, it remains civilized, with the only things being raised being glasses and voices. Debates are frequent in the bar area, especially between Procampan Marines and Navy or between the civilian sailors and their counterparts in the Diamond Legion. Most of the guests who take rooms are foreign sailors who arrive on trading ships.

The Happy Hippocampus is housed in a three-story building in the Port District. Its yellow roof is slanted over the bar. The shingle hanging out in front of the door shows a Hippocampus with a beer stein in its mouth, bubbles rising to the creature's side on the blue painted sign. When customers enter the door, they are assaulted by a wall of sound. The tavern area is right inside the door and the bar is across the 30' x 40 ' room. Behind it is a 10' x 30' kitchen and attached pantry. Right next to the bar is a set of stairs up to the rooms of the inn. Seven guest rooms and a large common room occupy the second floor. There is also a stairway behind a locked door (-25% chance to pick locks) up to the third floor, where the staff lives. In the kitchen is a stairway down to the basement, were the food and liquor is kept, including a small but well-stocked wine cellar. On the walls of the tavern hang various pieces of nautical equipment. Over the bar is a stern wheel, and above the door is an astrolabe. Also to be found are belaying pins, nets, ropes with grappling hooks, and other such memorabilia. There are 12 tables scattered across the tavern room, and they are constantly being moved around as required for larger or smaller parties.

The food here, mostly seafood, is inexpensive but good and filling. The drink quality varies from night to night as the proprietor, "Bawdy" Bialtor Doogen, is known to trade some of his home brew beer for foreign alcohol. This means one never knows what might be found on any night.

Besides the owner and his wife, three young waitresses comprise the whole staff. The waitresses are all pretty, the way Bialtor likes them, but he is protective of them. The customers may make comments about the ladies, but any one that touches them find out about the belaying pin Bialtor keeps behind the bar. The staff works long hours every day, but Bialtor treats the waitresses as family and the atmosphere is very lively.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. Bialtor and Rieggei started the tavern after helping capture a pirate ship, and the couple still has a map to the pirate captain's cache filled with gold, gems and other exotic items. If the inn were to fall on hard times, adventurers could find themselves hired to dig up pirate loot. Or, other pirates could be after the supposed map and the adventurers must delve into the mysterious attacks.

2. The former owner of the building possessed the last picture painted by the famous Procampan artist Tarluke Petrek. The painting is an abstract picture of Procampur as seen from the sky. According to some legends, if a person has the right words, that they can teleport to any spot in Procampur that they can spot on the map. However, Petrek's last days were spent at the Alajendro Hannith Rest Home in the hills near Procampur and it is rumored that those who gaze at the painting will spend their last days at the rest home as well, babbling nonsense and foaming at the mouth. The owner of the painting reportedly buried the painting in the basement, and left it there on purpose in an attempt to save his own sanity. While looking for some supplies, one of the waitresses discovers a loose floor board that reveals the painting. When she starts suffering mental lapses and refuses to explain, Bialtor calls in adventurers to find the truth. The painting itself is only the start, however, as the secret of the painter must be found for the effect to be reversed.

**Bialtor Doogen** Human Male F7 (CN)

Bialtor served many years and through many campaigns in the Procampan navy. His thick arms are covered with scars, and there are several on his face. For each of those scars, he has at least three stories, each even more imaginative than the last, to tell those in increasing states of

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY



drunkenness. Bialtor always tells the stories if asked, mostly because he loves the sound of his own voice as much as the sound of a good party. He sings and dances even as he tries to serve his customers, though fortunately his service is much better than his performing skills. Bialtor is a tall man, almost six foot tall, with blonde hair that is almost all fallen out and a blonde beard. He has a tattoo of a hippocampus on his left arm.

**Rieggei Doogen** Human Female F8 (NG)

Rieggei Doogen is a large though attractive woman with long brown hair and hazel eyes. Born in Procampur's District of the Poor, she spent most her young life helping out at The Slate Hall (a food kitchen run by local businessmen) where she learned about the restaurant business and protected smaller kids from bullies. At the age of 16, Rieggei enlisted in the Diamond Legion, and insisted on joining the Marines. After passage of the grueling basic training, she was assigned to the warship Askaphlone, where she met Bialtor. They fell in love during their tour of duty, and were married on ship. Rieggei is rarely seen, as she does most the cooking, and her appearance usually indicates trouble.

**Dysianna Sletor** Human Female 0-level (LN)

A lass of sixteen years, Dysianna has flaxen hair, blue eyes and pale complexion. Working the afternoon and early evening shift, she is a good waitress and especially attentive to those who appear to be able to use magic. Dysianna's fondest wish is to enroll at Procampur's Sividia Academy of Wizardry, and is intelligent enough to succeed at the school. Unfortunately for her, she does not have the fee to obtain admission, and she would be grateful to anyone who could help her.

**Maerleni Taern** Human Female SP1 (Shar) (NE)

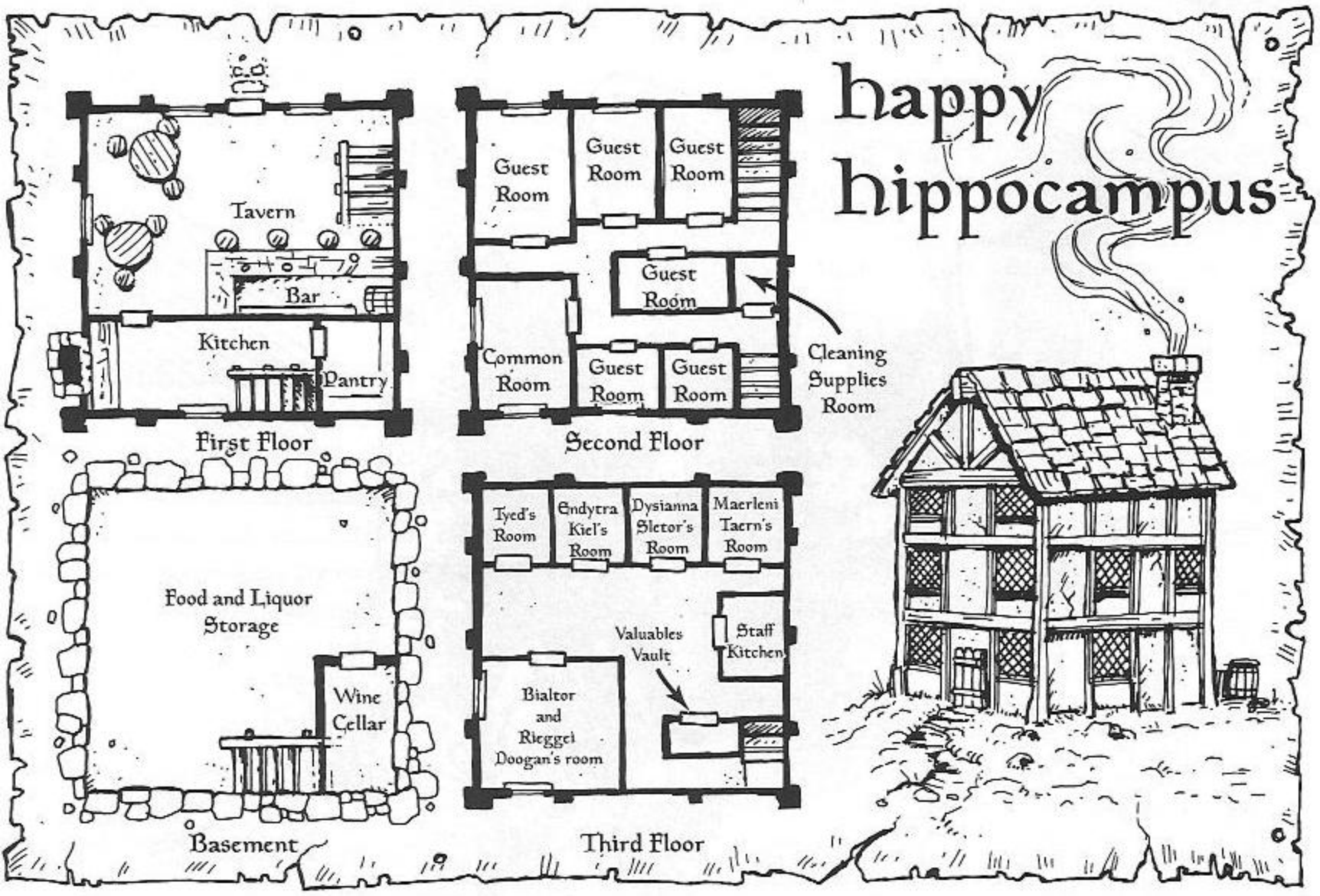
Maerleni works the late night-early morning shift. It is said her long raven tresses and her dark eyes have entranced many customers. She takes her dinner break during the hour surrounding midnight, without fail. She was recently recruited into the priesthood of Shar by a half elf woman and has taken to the dogma and the ritual quickly. Unfortunately, this will eventually spell trouble for the tavern, and for its owners.

**Endytra Kiel** Human Female T1 (CN)

Endytra works in the late afternoon into the evening. Her blonde hair falls to her shoulders and her green eyes shine like beacons. A friendly waitress, she always insures that a patron's drink is filled and pleasantly chats with the customer as she does it. Endytra has a second job that few know about. If Endytra hears anything of interest about business deals, shipping or other discreet matters, she will go to the kitchen and write the information down. Once a week, she takes these messages to a dark alley, where she meets a woman whom Endytra only knows as the Nightingale. However, the last few months, the Nightingale has not appeared. Thus, these notes have accumulated in Endytra's room, waiting for the return of her second employer.

**Tyed** Human Male 0-level (N)

Tyed is a scraggly kid with moppish brown hair and brown eyes. Being smallish in size, Tyed tended to be the target of many bullies in the District of the Poor. It was during one of these attacks that Rieggei met him. After driving away the bullies, Rieggei carried Tyed to the Happy Hippocampus, where she offered him a job as a busboy. Tyed works hard, cleaning the inn till it nearly shines, which is quite hard with all the navigation memorabilia on the walls. Tyed tends to be hesitant around strangers, due to his upbringing and experiences with bullies. ■



02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

# hunger in the harbor

*A SHORT AD&D® ADVENTURE IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS*

*Hunger in the Harbor is an AD&D® short adventure which can be set in any port city. Although FORGOTTEN REALMS® cities and characters are described, you can easily replace these to fit in with your local campaign. Although any level characters can survive, and possibly even succeed, a minimum of 24 levels and at least four characters is recommended. Any mix of races and classes is appropriate.*

## PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

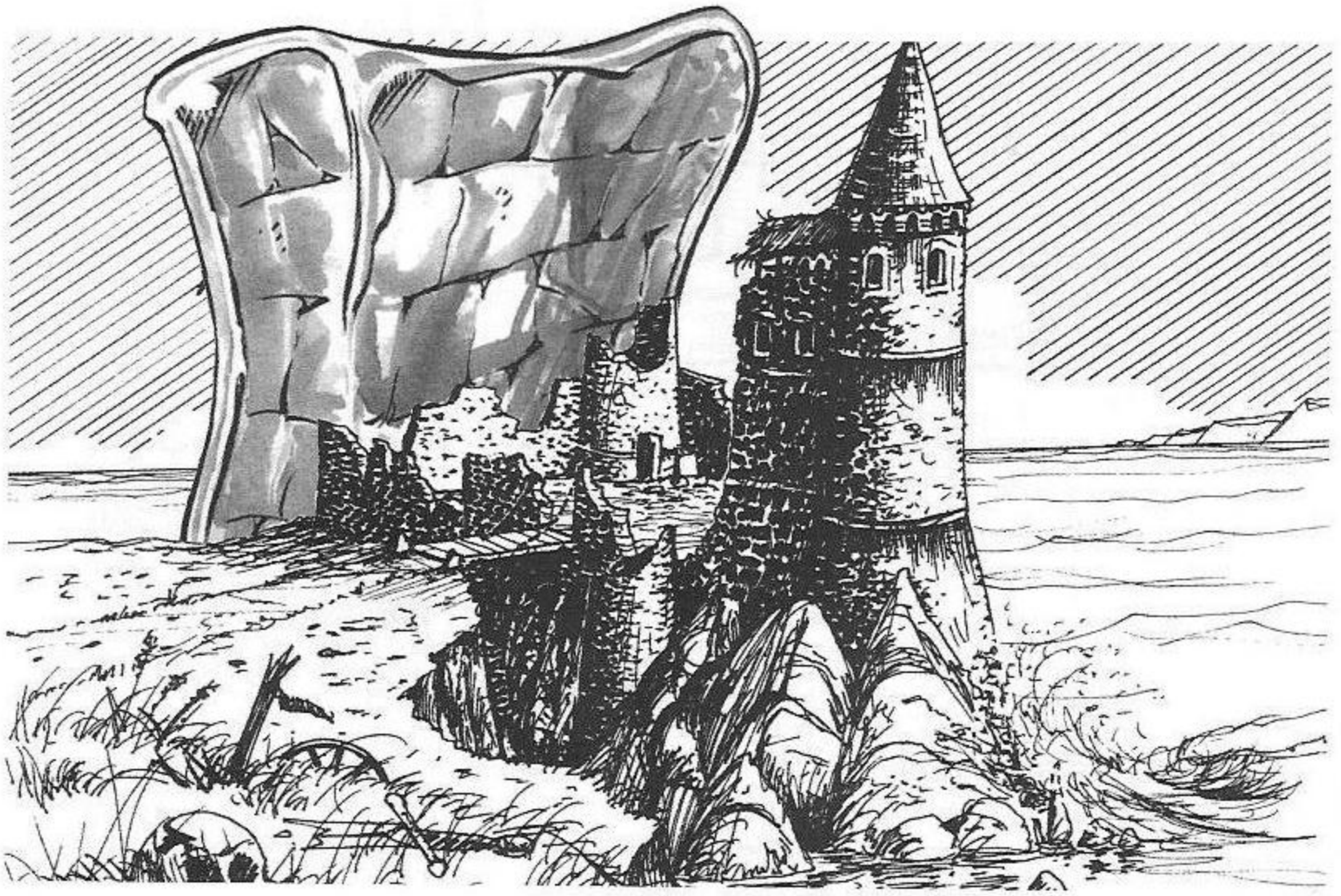
Normally a quiet place in the early morning, the port city of Iriabor seems bustling with activity today. Frantic people are running screaming through the crowded streets, some of them stopping to pick up children or possessions, all of them heading in the same directions. Clearly, something is wrong! You grab a tinker to ask him what's wrong. He tears away and points towards the harbor, shouting "It'll eat us all!". None of you are tinkers, so you bravely run the opposite way, fighting the growing mob fleeing as if for their lives. Above you, in a second story window, you see shutters open, and a curious face looks out along the street you're on. "Aaaiiiiii! It's a monster!" Slamming the shutter, the face retreats.

Whatever it is, you're not afraid of it-yet. You'e fought ogres, goblins, wolves, and worse. You run to the top of a short, wide flight of stairs leading down to the level of the harbor, where the "monster" seems to be, and then you see it! You missed it at first, because it seemed to be one of the long, stone warehouses that hold the wealth of the city, but it moved. A great slithering ooze overwhelms a small guard-post, crushing it with its great bulk and sending reverberations through the city that cause your legs to shake even when the rumble of crumbling stone has died down.

## FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER

Syntel, a founding partner of the Six Coffers Market Priakos, is always eager to expand operations, especially when there is little competition. Iriabor is hardly known for its armorers, but she managed to discover one of above-average skill and less than average resources. Askos, joumeyman armorer, had been quietly repairing scale and ring mail for nearly six years, unable to save enough money to start making higher quality ammors on his own. Syntel invested some funds, cautiously at first, then in larger amounts, in providing him with the raw materials, which he fashioned into high-quality suits of armor. Providing Askos with a small shop, a friendly face to sell his goods for him, and a large magically lit sign, Syntel set up a large purchase of pig iron to provide Askos with all the materials he needed for dozens of suits of armor.

Shylara Windmane (hf F4), childhood friend of Syntel, and captain of the free trader Nightstar, was charged with bringing the goods to Iriabor. Arriving in port late, Shylara left her goods in the hold until moming, posted a few guards and bustled off to see her friend.



02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

Nobody on board realized that, in Berdusk, the last port down the river, a hungry gray ooze was attracted by the smell of the iron and crept on board at night. It seeped into a case of iron and feasted like a halfling at a buffet. Most oozes reproduce by budding when reaching a certain size. Unfortunately, this specimen was unable to reproduce, and merely continued to grow. Soon the entire hold was taken up by its bulk and, having devoured its contents, the monster was eager to leave the ship in search of food.

It quickly killed the guards on board the ship and slunk down the loading ramp which was already in place for the next day. It has discovered a nearby warehouse and its stash of copper and silver coins, crushing the delicate glass and fine fumiture and making a big mess as it ate. At dawn, as it prepares to exit the warehouse, patrolling guards have seen its wake and shouted the alarm, and the PCs come onto the scene.

## FIGHTING THE MONSTER

Although the ooze cannot dissolve wood, tiles, or anything but metal. its mass is capable of effectively crushing buildings. It generally moves in a straight line towards the nearest mass of metal (armory, mint, warehouse). It takes a few extra rounds to crush small houses and shops rather than go around. In this way, its movement of 1 is further reduced, giving the PCs their only real advantage—mobility.

The PCs are free to do whatever they wish, including leave town. Since they will undoubtedly come up with a wide variety of unpredictable tactics, here are some guidelines for ruling the effectiveness of these ideas. Attacks capable of harming the ooze include large missile weapons such as wooden spears, rocks dropped or thrown from nearby roofs, and lightning attacks. Direct combat would work, although PCs would most likely have to retreat after only a few rounds if they decide to go toe-to-pseudopod. The PCs could gather a militia of leather armored, club-armed 0-level citizens at a rate of 1d4 per turn, to a maximum of 40; if the party includes a bard who actively helps round them up, increase this number to 1d6 per round with a maximum of 50. Summoned or conjured monsters would be useful in fighting, as would indirect support spells (chant, prayer, strength).

## TROUBLESHOOTING

If the party takes heavy losses and innocents are being slaughtered all around them, a little help could be needed. These options should only be used to help a party that has had bad luck with dice, were already weakened beforehand, or are clearly trying but not doing well. First, allow small missiles to do some damage. This amount should be expressed in a set maximum, perhaps 40 hp of damage. In no way should the party bring down a creature this size with no heart, no nervous system, and no intemal organs by using small missiles. If the party uses non-metal arrowheads (obsidian, bone, stone, wood) increase the amount of damage possible by 1-10 hit points (the maximum even for obsidian). A second option is to allow the ooze to take some damage as it crushes a building in its way, i.e. as its weight bears down on the roof, causing it to give way, the creature impales itself on the chimney, possibly taking 1-10 hp of damage. Here it pauses for a few extra rounds while it lashes out at the shell of the building with pseudopods.

On the other hand, the party might have too easy a time with the giant ooze. If PCs inflict serious damage on the ooze without flexing their brain muscles, here are two options for evening the odds. The first is to adjust the ooze's THAC0 to where it belongs, making it a 5. With its proper THAC0 the ooze wipes out conjured monsters more quickly. The second, more insidious method, is to allow the creature to regenerate hit points whenever it consumes metal items. Perhaps some rival of the party, seeing the fix they're in, lobs nails at the beast from behind a wall. If they allow to sit in a smithy and eat uninterrupted, the ooze should be able to regain up to 1 hp per round, gaining 1 HD for every 5 hp consumed past its normal maximum. This option puts more of a time constraint on the players than just "save the town from the monster."

## CONCLUSION

If the party is unable to defeat the monster, the PCs might be able to spread the word and evacuate the area. Evacuation should give the party a small experience award, since the party is saving lives and some property damage. Eventually, the city finds a high-level wizard to stop the ooze, but this search might take several days. Most wizards in the city are involved in research and have a poor spell selection for fighting giant slime creatures. Others saviors, neutral or evil in alignment, might ask some remuneration of the city in advance. The PCs, unable but eager to help, could be tasked to help persuade a reluctant mage to lend a hand, but this avenue is left to flesh out if it becomes necessary. Of course, by this time, the ooze will have grown still larger...

If the PCs defeat the monster, they should eam 500 to 1,000 xp for the damage they prevent to the city, in addition to that for killing the ooze. A full reward applies if the party stops the monster quickly, and the story XP is reduced as the ooze reduces more buildings to rubble.

**Giant gray ooze:** Int animal (1); AL Neutral; AC 8; MV 1; HD 25; hp 125; THAC0 9; #AT 3-6; Dmg 2-16 (pseudopods); SA corrode metal, when striking its pseudopods can reach out fully 10'; SD immune to heat and cold, most spells, because of it size the giant ooze takes no damage from size T or S weapons, including most missile weapons; SW full damage from lightning; MR nil; SZ G (roughly 50' long, 8' high, 30' wide); ML 16; XP value 16,000; MC oozes/slimes/jellies (modified).

Note that the giant ooze's THAC0 is much worse than indicated by its hit dice. Because of the way the creature strikes, forming a pseudopod and attacking by reflex, it gains no great advantage from larger mass. The giant ooze is much stronger than the normal-sized ooze, but also far slower. ■

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

# swash that buckle

*TURNING COMBAT INTO HEROIC BATTLES* *BY KEVIN TROY*

Often enough, a good roleplaying adventure has all the elements to turn the Saturday gaming session into a glorious epic suitable of rivaling the greatest of novels or Hollywood fantasy productions, except for one thing: combat. An adventure can have a marvelous hook, great plot line, wonderful descriptions, witty NPCs, and even balance of treasure to risk, and still be ruined if the players get bogged down and bored by slow and tedious combat.

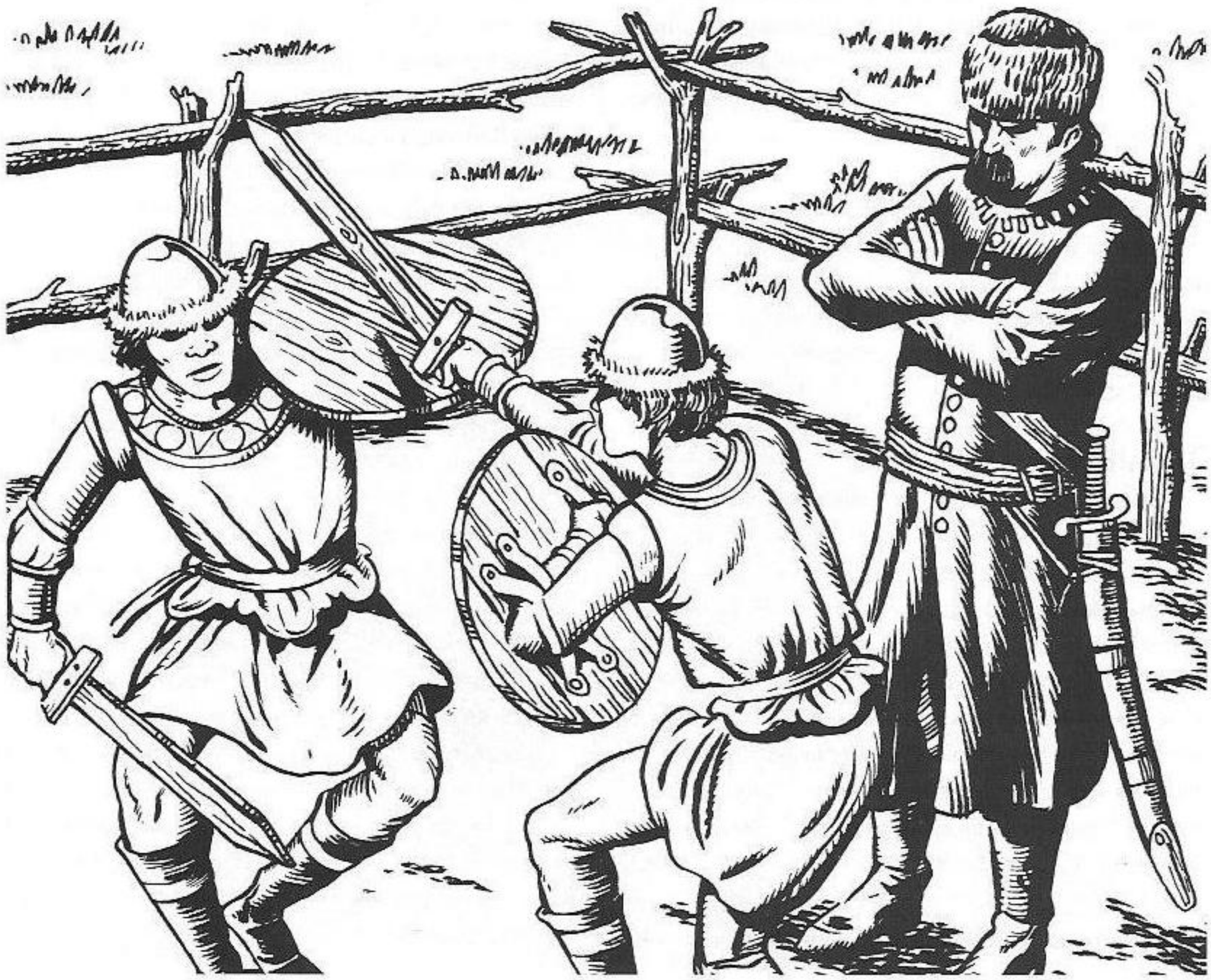
In this article, I hope to show how combat in the AD&D® game, and other RPGs, can rival the best Three Musketeers duel scene. There are five basic elements that you can use to improve combats: banning game jargon, psychological environment, motion and action, enemy personalities, and humor and modern culture.

## BANNING GAMESPEAK

Too often combat in many game systems breaks down into a contest of numbers. Instead of actually describing their attacks, players and DMs alike start saying, "Sixteen. You hit. Three points of damage. Five. I miss." This is not the way RPG combat should be. The result of this is much the same as it would have been if Tolkien had simply given a page for each character's statistics and made every combat scene a long list of numbers. Boring.

First off, try not to speak exclusively in numbers. When first starting out, it is easy to be intimidated by the thought of saying, "Daring Dirk heaves his sword Akalsh in a mighty arc into the skull of his foul orcish opponent." One .is likely to retreat back to saying, "I roll a l5 and hit for ll points of damage." Therefore, start with simple phrases, such as "Ladron gets a quick thrust in, severely wounding the guard for five points of damage." Later, you can get fancier, and may very well move on to vivid descriptions of each monster's individual attacks, weapons, and wounds. Also, see section three, "Make Fights Move," below.

Magic also deserves more description than it often gets. Saying "Hafdan casts magic missile and does seven points of damage," is just as boring as saying, "The sword hits for seven points of damage." Saying something to the effect of, "Hafdan flings two fiery magical bolts into the orc's face, mortally wounding it," is much better. The same also goes for magic items and many innate magic or special abilities, such as a cleric's ability to turn undead. However, be careful, as magic is often seen as taboo ground. The majority of parents who don't allow their kids to play RPGs do so because they believe that either the magic system or the multi-deity pantheons found in many games are actually believed in by the players. While this is entirely untrue, describing magic spells, especially cleric spells or summoning spells, in great detail can help encourage this belief in many people.



02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

## RUN YOU SUCKA!

Appropriate psychological environment is necessary in any part of a RPG. Combat shares this need especially. If you say, "you see ten orcs," the players will probably attack with gay abandon, even with five first level characters fresh out of adventuring school. However, if you say, "you see a group of heavily armored humanoids wearing helmets that disguise their features, carrying black, evil-looking scimitars and very large bows, and they outnumber you two to one," the players may think twice.

To start with, never give out monster statistics freely, or even monster names for that matter. There is no reason the characters would know what a monster's AC is, or how many hit points it has. However, humanoids often wear human armor and use human weapons, which is a good tip-off to most players. Relative descriptions are useful as well, such as, "The tarrasque's hide is about as thick as the armor on the main l6-inch turret of the USS New Jersey."

Monster names deserve secrecy, too. While a character who grew up in a town next to the Trollmoors will most likely recognize trolls, he probably won't know what a ver-beeg looks like. Also, many humanoids look alike, and the average character meeting an orc may mistake it for a hob-goblin. Remember, that orc is wearing armor, is most likely in a dark dungeon corridor (or behind 20 feet of trees and brush), and is probably moving too rapidly in an attempt to chop the PC's head off to be easily recognizable.

Of course, players who try to memorize every monster description can still be suprised. For example, a low-level adventuring party meets a group of what the educated player recognizes as orcs. The party attacks and is severely wounded by what turns out to be a group of orogs. Gas spores and nilbogs, of course, are infamous for looking exactly like beholders and goblins, respectively.

Make magic wielded by monsters and NPCs mysterious as well. You should never say, "The evil mage casts monster summoning I." Nobody besides someone able to cast the spell being cast should be able to identify it, and even then they'll have a hard time about it, as spells change slightly from caster to caster. Remember, various specialty priests may have entirely different spell formats (a priest of the song goddess might sing all his spells), and a bard's magic might be very different from a wizard's.

Once the players are unsure of exactly what they are fighting, you can take away any warning of an impending fight. Start rolling surprise checks secretly behind the DM screen. Nothing prepares a player for a fight better than the words, "Roll one ten-sided die." If you can catch the players off guard and make the monster's attack sound dramatic, they are much more likely to run.

Another important technique f or starting fights is to make the characters seem very weak and vulnerable compared to the monsters. The example with the orcs at the beginning of the section is one good example. By giving a threatening description, especially the part about being outnumbered two to one, you have probably made the players unsure of their chances in a fight against the creatures. Another good example comes from my own experience with the module Dl: Descent Into the Depths of the Earth. Our party, consisting of a barbarian, mage, cavalier, monk, and cleric (using AD&D first edition rules), all l0th level, was traveling in the underdark in search of drow. We all knew the capabilities of drow, their innate powers, number of hit dice, etc. We knew we could easily defeat the average drow in a fair stand-off. However, when the barbarian and the monk (who were scouting ahead) were suddenly lined by a faerie fire spell, we immediately screamed for our lives, fearing death at the hands of a drow ambush.

There are many other tricks useful in freaking out the players in any pressure situation, which definitely includes combat. Many examples can be found in West End Games' Paranoia game. For instance, the intro adventure features a submarine that the players must figure out how to manually control. If the characters pull the emergency crash dive lever, the module instructs the GM to scream "Aaahooga! Aaahooga!" at the top of his or her lungs. I have seen

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
31 .....READER SURVEY

players (who would have otherwise found the "cancel" button with no problem) completely paralyzed by this.

## MAKE FIGHTS MOVE

Fights should move. Any swordplay scene in any movie features a great deal of motion. Unfortunately, most AD&D combats I have seen recently involve the fighters remaining motionless in the doorway to the room, slaughtering the monsters as they come. This is not at all heroic. Remember that scene in *Excalibur* where young Arthur leaped off the castle battlements, knocking Uriens off his horse? How about the various duel scenes in *'The Princess Bride?'* What about the part in *The Crystal Shard* where Bruenor swung off the cliff face with a rope around his waist, knocking a dozen goblins off the mountainside? All of these scenes were glorious battle scenes, and all of them involved lots of motion.

Once you have managed to make your combats descriptive, using the tips in part I of this article, you should work on involving a little more action. While it can be assumed that any battle taking place in a spacious area involves many feints, thrusts and a lot of fancy footwork, why assume when you can have fun describing it?

Encourage the players to have their characters use the environment while in combat. If you give good descriptions of the environment, at least including room furniture, major terrain features, and so on, then the characters will be able to use these in a fight. For example, encourage your players to dive under tables to escape a vicious flurry of sword attacks, swing on chandeliers and curtains into large groups of men (hopefully knocking them down), climb trees to escape wolves, or take cover behind large wine barrels. You can encourage them to do this by making things turn out well if they do (i.e., apply a minor modifier to either their attack roll or AC, using the cover and concealment rules your judgement).

The *Complete Fighter's Handbook* features many maneuvers that. can greatly improve the motion of combats, using the called-shot rules. Unfortunately, these maneuvers are very hard to accomplish and not useful except in specific situations. For example, the rules state that to disarm an opponent who is using a single-handed weapon, a character must declare the disarm before initiative, suffering a +1 penalty to initiative and a -4 penalty on the attack roll. Therefore it is very hard to disarm opponents compared to simply slaughtering them. While this is useful if you are attacked by someone you don't wish to kill, it isn't used often against orcs. I suggest modifying the rules for special attacks, such as smashing something being held, grabbing, parrying, or pinning. In this new modified version, the defender only counts Dexterity and magical adjustments to AC (don't forget the attacker is still at -4 to hit), not armor. Plate mail and Dexterity of l7 would only give an AC of 7 versus a disarm attempt, but chain mail +2 and Dexterity of l7 would give AC 5.

Of course, characters will eventually start combining called shot attacks with their environment. Many classic maneuvers can be performed by doing this, such as using a called shot to knock down a chandelier, sending it crashing into the advancing guards, or using an expert disarm to send the Sword of Kas flying into depths of an ancient volcano.

## PUT A LITTLE LIFE INTO IT

Often enough, a good DM will develop a complete history, set of motivations, personality, and funny voice to use for every NPC, but when these villains face combat, they always react in the same way: either the "charge in and slaughter" method or the "stand back and give underlings orders while casting spells" method. This is not a very realistic way of playing NPCs. Every NPC should react slightly differently to combat. What would Zorro be without his initial-carving or Indiana Jones without his whip and hat?

While an NPC or monster personality can easily be displayed in the choice of weapons (a big, brash warrior may like axes and two-handed swords, while an assassin may prefer daggers and other small weapons) it is even better shown in their tactics. A righteous paladin will probably meet his foes head-on, not caring to attack by surprise (and therefore giving them a fair chance), and might decide to use parry attacks and disarms often. A slinky thief with no backbone will probably run, hide, or possibly try to fast-talk his way out of combat.

Player characters may develop stock tactics that suit their personalities for combat, such as a swashbuckler who always tries to climb up on tables and make daring summersaults into the fray, carving initials on peoples' cheeks. Or perhaps the dwarf always blasts one shot from his crossbow and then closes with his axe, spouting curses. Some players may develop phrases ranging from, "It's tax collecting time, boys," (used for wealthy monsters) to the Monty Python battle cry, "Run away! Run away!"

Mages will reflect their personalities in spell selection as

well. A good kindly druid will probably use spells such as hold person or entangle, and cast cure spells on his comrades. On the other hand, a Red Wizard of Thay will probably use sadistic spells such as polymorphing a character into a newt.

NPCs may occasionally say something in combat that develops their personality, ranging from "take that, villain" to "do you yield?" Don't overplay this aspect, and certainly don t have the bad guys start discussing the weather (unless you're working on Humor). Still, it can be effective (see the duel scenes in *The Princess Bride* or the final fight of *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* for examples).

## HUMOR ME A BIT

Some roleplayers are all business. They believe that roleplaying, combat included, is serious business, and there is no room for humor in the middle of a battle between the demi-lich Acerak and your l5th level band of heroes. However, humor can be used to brighten up roleplaying in many places, even combat. Read the scenes in *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* where Tasslehoff and Flint screw up a fight with their antics, and you'll get the drift.

Different types of humor can be used in combat, and they all are effective to some extent. One type is the comedy of errors. This often comes up by accident in games that use critical fumble rules—for example, a character drops all five swords, daggers and maces he was carrying. Or, try having the characters desperately try to fix the castle's catapult to help defend against the orcish siege outside. Just as they repair it, a huge boulder from the orcs' own catapult smashes it to pieces.

Another effective channel for comedy is NPCs. Imagine a completely insane warrior who will charge after a group of warriors and fight viciously sometimes, but will start polishing his sword when the party is surrounded by wererats. Or, try having the party meet a famous character from a book or movie. I remember my own mage's encounter with Fizban from the DRAGONLANCE® novels fondly, especially because the party thief didn't know who he was and attacked him. One friend of mine related his encounter with Fangorn the Ent (of Tolkein fame) while fleeing from a blue dragon. Fangorn, of course, was famous for his slowness and tendency to think for hours on end before acting ("Blue dragon? Ho-hmm, let me see if I remember anything about them... hmm-hmm.")

Humor is not the only use for popular fiction and media. If your players are familiar with a movie, TV show, or book, you can use descriptions related to that to enhance your game. This can range from telling the kid whose never played before that a scimitar looks like Azim's sword in the Kevin Costner Robin Hood movie to describing a wind-buffeted catwalk between two towers by mentioning that the characters hear sounds of pursuit approaching and then saying, "Hey guys, do you remember *The Elfstones of Shannara*?"

Familiar concepts aren't limited to fiction either. Many rooms and battles can be described easily by saying something like, "The room is about the size of the school cafeteria."

You should be careful not to overuse any of these, however. Comic relief is good once in a while, but should not be used excessively in any one adventure (unless you're playing Paranoia, that's different). Meeting famous personalities, both from fiction and real life, can be a real treat, but players usually either grow bored or try to use this as a loophole ("OK, fine. We give Mr. Schwarzenegger a broadsword and put him in front rank—is his strength l8/00 or 19?") Finally, using real-life descriptions can be easy and useful, but also can take away the flavor of the game. In general, only do this if a player is confused as to how big a room or an object is, or how tall the ogre really is ("Do you know the basketball rim at the playground?").

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully, using these tips and devices, you can improve the combat situations in your games to a more enjoyable, faster-moving, and more rewarding point. Always remember, though, that some players may not be used to some of these techniques, especially those involving banning gamespeak and using called shots and maneuvers. If a player is intimidated by too quick a change in the way combat is run, he may decide to give up the game. It is best to start gradually, avoiding overkill, and then work your way up. ■

**Check the RPGA convention calendar on the world wide web at http://www.rpga.com for even more conventions running RPGA events. You can find events under almost every rock and behind almost every tree if you look.**

### MILWAUKEE SUMMER REVEL 3

June 10-13, 1999

Inn Towne Hotel, 710 North Old World Third Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202

Internet site: http://www.rli-net.net/~melka/msr/index.htm

Come to Milwaukee's other gaming convention. We feature first run LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH, LIVING JUNGLE, Shadowrun Virtual Seattle, and BOOT HILL™ games. Plus there's a Wham-A-Thon—vie for the coveted Moose Trophy; Kingmaker miniatures spectacular; SETTLERS OF CATAN challenge; Axis & Allies; Shark; Manhattan; and much more. Visit our dealers, enter the LIVING CITY PC miniature painting contest, and go fishing with Benny at our interactive.

Convention fees: $35 through pre-registration. NO GAME FEES. Make checks or money orders payable to: Bruce Rabe, P.O. Box 779, New Munster, WI 53152

### THUNDERCON

June 17 - 20, 1999

Radisson Hotel, 8787 Reeder Road in Overland Park, Kansas

Contact: ThunderCon 99, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City, MO 64116-0157

Internet: http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/RPGKC/thunder.html

Thunder Castle Games and The Role-Players Guild of Kansas City, Ltd. Will present ThunderCon 99. ThunderCon 99 is the second convention co-hosted by Thunder Castle and the seventeenth convention hosted by the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City, Ltd. Numerous types of gaming will take place including role-playing, miniatures, card, board, strategy, and interactive ("live-action") gaming. If you are interested in presenting your own event, the pre-registration booklet deadline is April 22, 1999. In order to receive your judging discount on admission, your event must be printed in the pre-registration booklet.

# conventions

*FEATURING RPGA®-SANCTIONED TOURNAMENTS*

### ORIGINS™ INTERNATIONAL GAME EXPO & FAIR '99

July 1 - 4, 1999

Columbus Convention Center & the Hyatt, Columbus, Ohio

Contact Andon Unlimited at 1-800-529-EXPO e-mail Andon@AOL.com

Focus on history, celebrity signings, seminars, roleplaying games, largest independent War College, historical miniatures, RPGA events, Live Action Role Playing Events (LARPs), board and computer games, and collectable card games, favorites include the Auction and the Art Show, a Maze of Games and more. Check out our website at www.andonunlimited.com for more information on our conventions, for the latest updates, or to register. Pre-registration Weekend Badge $40.00

### DRAGON*CON '99

July 1-4, 1999

Hyatt Regency, Atlanta Apparel Mart, and Atlanta Merchandise Mart, Atlanta, GA.

Contact: Mark Liberman, markdragon@aol.com for RPGA event info

Internet: http://www.dragoncon.org/

Attendees will listen to and discuss informative topics with authors, editors, artists, game designers and media personalities in over 550 hours of panels, workshops, demonstrations and discussions, including individual program tracks for Star Trek, Star Wars, X-Files (and the paranormal), Babylon 5, Xena, Hercules, Highlander, British media, American SF/fantasy on TV, NASA space science, writers, artists, children and much more! We'll feature hundreds of the most popular role-playing, card and dice, board, miniature and computer game tournaments, live concerts (including GWAR, returning again by popular demand), nightly deejayed dances, 24-hour open gaming, live role-playing events and your evening room parties.

### HEXACON 9

July 9-11, 1999

Sunspree Resort, Scottsdale, AZ

Contact: Brandon Kavanagh, KavanaghB@aol.com

RPGA events include three LIVING CITY™ events, LIVING JUNGLE™, LIVING DEATH™. Also includes US Chess Federation events, MAGIC: THE GATHERING®, Board Gaming and Open Gaming.

### GEN CON® GAME FAIR'99

August 5-8, 1999

Midwest Express Center, Milwaukee, WI

Contact Andon Unlimited at 1-800-529-EXPO e-mail Andon@AOL.com

Event Highlights: National Championships, demo games, miniatures, RPGA, Roleplaying, MAGIC: THE GATHERING, TCG Tournaments, Board Games, Costume Contest, Anime Room, Art Show, Auction, celebrity signings, seminars, exhibit hall, and more. Check out our website at www.andonunlimited.com for more information on our conventions, for the latest updates, or to register.Pre-registration Weekend Badge $50.00.

Don't miss the RPGA Inferno! Information can be found on pages 26-29 of POLYHEDRON® issue 135.

### COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL

August 12-15, 1999

San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, CA

Contact: General Info, cciweb@aol.com, Scott Kalman, scottk@score.com for RPGA event info

Internet: http://www2.comic-con.org/comiccon/

The biggest event of its kind in the United States, Comic-Con International is the place for fans of comic books, movie memorabilia, action figures and all things related to pop-culture. Held every year in San Diego, CA, Comic-Con International features the largest gathering of comic book publishers, creators and professionals of any convention or event of it's kind in north America.

Comic-Con International: San Diego isn't just about comic books, though. Exhibitors at Comic-Con International: San Diego include television and movie studios previewing their new projects and offering a chance for you to meet, and get autographs, from your favorite media stars in an atmosphere and setting unseen and unmatched by any other event anywhere!

Gamemasters Limited, WARLords and the GLRPGAC will present RPGA events throughout the whole convention. This is the big one for Southwest region members.

POLYHEDRON Magazine (the official magazine of TSR Inc.'s ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network) is published bimonthly by TSR, Inc. - P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057. ■ Phone: 800/324-6496, Fax: 425/226-3182. Email: polyhedron@wizards.com ■ POLYHEDRON Magazine is mailed free to all GUILD-LEVEL™ RPGA® Network members. Yearly membership rates for North America US$20, Canada and Mexico US$25, International US$40 (air mail). Prices subject to change without notice. Change of address must be received at least 30 days prior to effective date of change to ensure uninterrupted delivery. ■ Unless special arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication, materials submitted for publication in POLYHEDRON Magazine are accepted solely on the condition that the material may be edited and published in POLYHEDRON Magazine or for RPGA Network sanctioned events. TSR and the RPGA Network shall make no other use of materials unless TSR and the author or artist enter into a written agreement regarding use. TSR grants authors a non-exclusive right to use copyrighted materials of TSR in their submissions to TSR. An author, however, shall have no right to publish or permit someone other than TSR to publish a submission that includes any copyrighted materials of TSR without first obtaining the written permission of TSR to do so. If you are ever in a bad mood, just think of a monkey. Letters addressed to the RPGA Network or TSR, Inc. will be considered as submissions and may be printed in whole or part at the discretion of the editor unless the sender specifically requests otherwise in writing. Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed in POLYHEDRON Magazine are those of individual authors, not necessarily the opinions of TSR, Inc., the RPGA Network, or its staff. Standard Disclosure Forms, Writer's Guidelines, Tournament Request Forms, Membership Forms, Club Forms, and Classified Ad Forms are available from Network HQ. ■ ® and ™ designate trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. © 1998 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. ■ MARVEL SUPER HEROES, SUPER HERO, MARVEL UNIVERSE and the characters and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of Marvel Characters Inc. and are used with permission. © 1998 Marvel Characters, Inc. ■ Other product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. Use of a product's name without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

**WINTER FANTASY™ Show 2000: January 13-16, 2000**
**RPGA™ Summit: January 11-12, 2000**
**Fort Wayne Hilton and**
**Grand Wayne Convention Center**
**Fort Wayne, Indiana**
Internet information:
**www.winterfantasy.com**
**www.rpga.com**

The Network's own convention is back in our hands. We are working on a very special schedule of games and other activities that harken back to the old days of WINTER FANTASY. Come play with the best in tournaments chosen especially to please. Several important events in LIVING™ campaign settings will take place.

WINTER FANTASY this year is run by RPGA. Member Don Weatherbee will be recruiting judges and handling registration, so you know that you will have a judge for every game we offer. Jae Walker will run the onsite headquarters, and other talented members will be involved as well.

"Why move to Fort Wayne? Isn't that out of the way?" Not at all. Fort Wayne is 158 miles from Chicago, 161 miles from Detroit, 153 miles from Cincinnati, and about 170 miles from Columbus. That's less than three hours' drive to most major metropolitan centers in the Midwest. The weather is not so bad considering it's winter, and the hotel/convention site is very nice.

Convention registration will be $25 pre-reg through December 15th. Judges and volunteers working three slots get in free. Look for online registration on the website soon. Hotel rooms are $87 per night at the Fort Wayne Hilton ($97 triple/quad occupancy). Judges and volunteers working six slots are eligible for free housing. The event schedule will be available this summer online, and the pre-reg book will be in the October issue of POLYHEDRON® Magazine.

Start off the new century's convention season at the RPGA's own convention, WINTER FANTASY. The games will be great, the company more so. What more could you want?

The RPGA Summit is a gathering of members from around the world to discuss important issues relating to the future of the Network. Last year's Summit was very successful, with 23 people coming in from as far away as England and Australia to discuss issues on the LIVING CITY Campaign, Clubs, Regional Directors, the new LIVING GREYHAWK campaign, and more. Plus, they met with designers and discussed upcoming TSR products. In the evenings we socialized and got to know one another.

This year's Summit will attempt to discuss fewer topics, but go into much more depth with each of them. Topics have not been decided yet, but we are open to suggestion. By holding it at WINTER FANTASY, we hope that more members can contribute to the future of the RPGA.

The Summit will take place two days before WINTER FANTASY, and there will be two discussion sessions during the convention for those who cannot come early. There is no additional fee for the summit.

02 .....ANNOUNCEMENTS
03 .....NOTES FROM HQ
08 .....ELMINSTER
30 .....CONVENTIONS
32 .....READER SURVEY

# reader survey

*WE'RE HERE TO HEAR*

Please rank each article or section of the magazine from 1-5 with 1 being "Don't kill trees for this." and 5 being "Do it again, boy! Do it again!" Please include any other comments you feel are appropriate. All responses received on or before July 1, 1999 will be entered for a drawing to win a free copy of the *Return to the Keep on the Borderlands*. Woo-hoo!

RPGA # _____ Name _____

| | RATING | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ARTICLE** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Announcements | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Notes From HQ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Table Talk | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Member Spotlight | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Internet 101 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Elminster's Everwinking Eye | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| City Stories: Temple of Selûne | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Club Decathalon Monster: Scorched One | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Rockroost | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The House of the Spice Merchant | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Rogues Gallery: Blind Dick | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The Happy Hippocampus | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Hunger in the Harbor Adventure | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Swash That Buckle: Heroic Combat | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Conventions | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

For only pennies a day you too can have a voice in the content and format of POLYHEDRON Magazine! That's right, for a measly 35¢ stamp, you can tell us what you think!

Sure, it ain't curing world hunger or helping Sally Struthers gain another dress size, but it will help us tailor Poly to your wants and needs. Of course, if you come up with crappy ideas, we'll know where you live and hunt you down. But hey, you rolls the dice, you takes your chances, right?

Once you've gone to all the trouble of filling this survey out, pop this sucker into your local blue mailbox and a happy, well-adjusted postal worker will hand deliver this to the POLYHEDRON staff, ensconced deep within the secret underground WOTC compound. Once there, your survey will be read by a large staff of trained monkeys, tabulated and then fed into our massive SOLOMON-UNIVAC computer system. Or something like that. Do it now. For the children. If you're afraid of monkeys and postal workers (after all, who isn't!) just fax it to us. It's easy, and nearly free.

**Polyhedron Reader Response #135**
**P.O. Box 707**
**Renton, WA 98057-0707 USA**

**FAX:** 425-226-3182

**COMMENTS**